TELOS

NUMBER 112 SUMMER 1998

The Fate of Modernity

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One-year Individual . . . $40.00 One-year Institutional $95.00
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Telos number 112 corresponds to Vol. 30, No. 2. ***Telos*** is published in the Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter by Telos Press Ltd. Periodicals postage paid at New York and additional mailing offices. Send address changes and inquiries to:

Telos
431 E. 12th Street, New York, NY 10009

© 1998, Telos Press Ltd. ISSN 0090-6514
Tel.: # 212-228-6479 Fax: # 212-228-6379 e-mail: telospress@aol.com
Web site: http/www.angelfire.com/biz/telospress/index.html

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Table of Contents:

Articles:

Modernity and Totalitarianism....3
Luciano Pellicani

Modernity, Libertarianism and Critical Theory:
Reply to Pellicani....23
Alex Delfini and Paul Piccone

Localism vs. Nationalism in Midwestern Populism....47
Göran Dahl

Carl Schmitt on Friends, Enemies and the Political....68
Andrew Norris

Baudrillard's Nihilism and the End of Theory....89
Anthony King

Ecology as a Pseudo-Religion?....107
Manussos Marangudakis

The Spanish Federalist Tradition and the 1978 Constitution....125
Daniele Conversi

Academic Deception for Fun and Profit....145
Robert Weissberg

Reviews:

Rethinking the Self....161
Catherine Pickstock

Nazism and Communism: Evil Twins?....178
Alain de Benoist

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Modernity and Totalitarianism

Luciano Pellicani

I

According to a standard definition of modernity, its essential elements are industrialization, rationalization and bureaucratization. As such, modernity is at best a *Zivilisation*, but not quite a *Kultur*. Not surprisingly, Zygmunt Bauman has argued that the Holocaust was a rare but crucial test "of the hidden possibilities of modern society."[1] He goes on to write that, without modern society, "the Holocaust would be unthinkable. It was the rational world of modern civilization that made it conceivable. The Nazi mass murder of European Jewry was not only the technological achievement of an industrial society but also the organizational achievement of bureaucratic society."[2] In short, the Holocaust was the product of a bureaucratic culture which, predicated on the "spirit of instrumental rationality,"[3] was indifferent to moral values.

Clearly, modern industrial organization was an indispensable condition for the "final solution."[4] However, from this it does not follow, as Bauman claims, that "the very idea of the *Endlösung* was the outcome of bureaucratic culture."[5] Contrary to Bauman, historically the Third Reich was not

1. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), p. 12.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.
4. There is "a close relation between totalitarian politics and scientific and technological resources. Without them totalitarianism could not go beyond certain limits . . . . A certain level of technological development is necessary for the existence and permanence of a totalitarian regime. But a necessary condition is not by itself sufficient . . ." Domenico Fisichella, *Totalitarianismo* (Rome: La Nuova Italia Scientifica, 1987), p. 131.
5. Bauman, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

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characterized by the impersonal domination of *ratio* but "the subordination of rationality . . . to the pretenses of ideology"[6] which, in the long run, had disastrous consequences.[7] Similarly, the plan to annihilate the "Jewish race" was the product of a typically charismatic leader.[8] Finally, the Holocaust is a unique phenomenon incommensurable with the many other mass exterminations throughout the centuries by traditional bureaucratic states. The uniqueness of the "final solution" becomes obvious when one examines what inspired it. As Hitler put it in one of his last speeches: "I have been loyal in dealing with Jews. At the eve of the war I gave them one last warning. I warned them that, if they precipitated the world into war once again, this time they would not be spared — and the parasites would be definitively exterminated in Europe. We have made the Jewish abscess explode like all others. Future generations will be eternally grateful."[9]

In light of this, it makes no sense to claim that the mass extermination of Jews was the product of bureaucratic rationality. The bureaucratic machine *was* indispensable. More important, however, was a *Weltanschauung* exhibiting all the characteristics of a revolutionary gnosis[10] obsessed, like all revolutionary gnosis, with the idea that the world is a moral morass infested by parasites to be mercilessly exterminated. In the final analysis, the connection Bauman draws between modernity and the Holocaust is predicated on a profoundly mistaken interpretation of totalitarianism. If totalitarianism was identical with bureaucratic domination, it would be an old phenomenon, existing since the first great civilizations, constructed and dominated by the Megamachine.[11]

Even more serious is the identification of the essence of modernity with the technological-industrial apparatus and instrumental rationality. Here Bauman ignores the fact that modernity has been and continues to

6. Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984) p. 306.

7. The Holocaust itself shows the profound irrationality of the Nazi regime. In fact, "it seems insane to have taken the means of transportation out of the Eastern front, where desperately needed, and use them in a completely useless operation. Nor does it seem any less insane to have deprived Germany of a labor force that would have been able to contribute to the country's war effort." William Carr, *Hitler* (London: Arnold, 1978), p. 118.

8. Cf. Luciano Cavalli, *Carisma e Tirannide nel Secolo XX. Il Caso Hitler* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1982) and J. P. Sironneau, *Secularisation et Religions Politiques* (Den Haag: Mouton, 1982).

9. Adolf Hitler, *Ultimi Discorsi* (Padova: Edizioni Ar, 1988), p. 52.

10. On Nazism as a gnostic mass movement, see James M. Rhodes, *The Hitler Movement* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1980).

11. Lewis Mumford, *The Myth of the Machine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954).

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be the *only* "civilization based on rights and freedoms." This is the source of his misunderstanding of the historical-cultural significance of the National-Socialist revolution, which was fundamentally a revolt against modernity as a culture of rights and freedoms.[12] Beginning with the *Gleichschaltung*, Germany effectively broke with the Western cultural tradition and, in the name of a *völkische Kultur*, mobilized against bourgeois *Zivilisation*, rejecting all of it except technology, science and the industrial organization of productive forces. The result was what Jeffrey Herf has called "reactionary modernism," i.e., a paradoxical and self-destructive mix of technology and irrationalism completely alien to "modernity, capitalism or to the Enlightenment."[13]

II

While arbitrary, the identification of modernity and instrumental rationality, the key to Bauman's reading of the Holocaust, is not surprising. As far back as the 1930s, members of the Frankfurt School insisted that Nazi totalitarianism had to be seen as the "logical" arrival point of a civilization (modern culture) based on the insane identification of reason with *ratio*. In 1939, Max Horkheimer claimed that it was wrong to see the Nazi dictatorship as a break with Western culture. On the contrary, the "order produced in 1789 as a road to progress carried along with it the tendency toward Nazism," to the point that "fascism is the truth of modern society," and that "to combat fascism with reference to liberal thought means appealing to what has allowed fascism to win."[14]

Followers of Joseph de Maistre would have no trouble agreeing with this, since they also claim that the race toward modern barbarism begins with the "diabolical work"[15] of the Enlightenment and 1789. Augusto Del Noce, who Norberto Bobbio called the "de Maistre of the 20th Century," describes modernity as an "intrinsically totalitarian" culture — a characterization which appears lifted out of one of the most wretched

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12. Not by accident, Schmitt celebrated the figure of Hitler as the "political soldier" who had taken on the historical mission of "liberating the German people from the confusion of a century of bourgeois constitutionalism," destroying the whole "liberal-democratic ideal." See Carl Schmitt, *Staatsgefüge und Zusammenbruch des Zweiten Reiches: Der Sieg des Bürgers über den Soldaten* (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsansalt, 1934), pp. 48-49.

13. Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, *op. cit.*, p. 301.

14. Max Horkheimer, "Gli Ebrei e l'Europa" in *Crisi della Ragione e Trasformazione dello Stato* (Rome: Savelli, 1978), pp. 36, 52, and 55.

15. Joseph De Maistre, *Considerazioni sulla Francia* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1988) p. 76.

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books ever written: *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.[16] In this sociological pseudo-classic, while acknowledging that "social freedom is inseparable from enlightened thought," Adorno and Horkheimer claim that "the actual historical forms — the social institutions — with which it is interwoven, already contains the seed of the reversal" which has made humanity sink into a new kind of barbarism.[17] Following Adorno and Horkheimer, the reason for this is that the Enlightenment, in its attempt to free men from myth, magic and superstition, formulated a science which consciously rejected "meaning" and identified knowledge with the "calculability of the world."[18] The birth and global expansion of a model of social organizations "ruled by equivalence" relegated to the world of appearances "that which does not reduce to numbers," and required "the destruction of gods and qualities."[19] In short, the "Enlightenment is totalitarian"[20] in that its devastating work of demythologization has disenchanted the world and inaugurated the era of the "leveling domination of abstraction"[21] in which the astute *homo oeconomicus* acts as master, while everything is seen "under the aspect of manufacture and administration."[22] Consequently "it is not merely that domination is paid for by the alienation of man from the objects dominated: with the objectification of spirit, the very relations of man — even those of the individual to himself — were bewitched. The individual is reduced to the nodal point of the conventional responses and modes of operation expected of him. Animism spiritualized the object, whereas industrialism objectifies the spirits of men."[23]

It is difficult to see how this reading of modern culture differs from that of René Guénon.[24] In both cases, modernity coincides with the "reign of quantity." There is, however, a difference. Guénon condemned Western

16. Augusto Del Noce, *L'Epoca della Secolarizzazione* (Milan: Giuffrè, 1970), p. 27. In an interview with *Expresso* on the occasion of the bicentennial of the French Revolution, Del Noce pointed out that the members of the Frankfurt School were "substantially right" in depicting "today's world as one of completely heterodirected consciousnesses."
17. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, tr. by John Cumming (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), pp. xiii and xvii.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 5 and 7.
19. *Ibid.*, pp.7-8.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
24. René Guénon, *Le Regne de la Quantité et les Signes des Temps* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972) and *La Crise du Monde Moderne* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).

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rationalism because of its "satanic" tendency to demolish all traditional institutions and values, while Adorno and Horkheimer indict the Enlightenment in the name of a refined form of animism: the dialectical vision of history. Yet, the result is the same: the unconditional condemnation of all of modern culture as an irrational and unnatural form of social organization.

Herbert Marcuse's position is essentially the same. In *Reason and Revolution*, he describes the modern world as an arena in which two concepts of reason, the positivistic and the dialectical, clash. The former "positive philosophy was going to affirm the existing order against those who asserted the need for 'negating' it";[25] the latter ". . . leads to the most fundamental objection of all, that negative philosophy, because of its conceptual makeup 'negates' things as they are. The matters of fact that make up the given state of affairs, when viewed in light of reason, become negative, limited, transitory — they become perishing forms within a comprehensive process that leads beyond them."[26] Thus dialectical reason is intrinsically revolutionary, while positivistic reason is just as intrinsically conservative. The satisfaction of human aspirations for a "qualitatively different" life correspond with the victory of dialectical over positivistic thought which, by feeding "false consciousness" with its pseudo-science, prevents the "attainment of a rational ordering of life."[27]

The ease with which Marcuse reads the entire Enlightenment tradition from Locke to Bernstein, through Hume and Kant, as "expressing the abdication of reason"[28] is breath-taking. Even more incredible is that, as a superior kind of rationalism he proposes a *Weltanschauung* with all the traits of Manichean gnosticism. As with the Manicheans, the salvation of humanity is a function of the cosmic war between the "children of darkness" and the "children of light." Thus, for the theoretician of the Great Refusal, the liberation of "repressive society" is closely bound with the outcome of the global clash between positivists and dialecticians. The first constitute, in Marx' and Engels' language, the "conservative party," the latter, the "destructive party" with the historical mission to raze everything ". . . with the abolition of private property men are to obtain true ownership over all those things that have hitherto remained estranged from them."[29]

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25. Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), p. 327.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 325.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 322.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 288.

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From these premises, it is understandable why Marcuse states that "the fact of classes contradicts freedom, or, rather, transforms it into an abstract idea,"[30] and sees the institutions of the constitutional state safeguarding civil rights as a façade behind which capitalist-bourgeois society hypocritically hides its terminally repressive nature. Of course, he does recognize that a government of law, whatever its limitations, is always infinitely better than a government above or without law. But this does not prevent him from writing that 'totalitarian' "is not only the terroristic political coordination of society, but also to a non-terroristic economic-technical coordination which operates through the manipulation of needs by vested interests. It thus precludes the emergence of an effective opposition against the whole. Not only by a specific form of government or party rule makes for totalitarianism, but also a specific system of production and distribution which may well be compatible with a 'pluralism' of parties, newspapers, 'countervailing powers,' etc."[31]

This is the Hegelian night in which all cows are black. What is Marcuse actually saying? That advanced industrial societies, whatever political-juridical forms they adopt, are irremediably totalitarian? This is because of the triumph of positivistic rationality, which manipulates and subjugates all to its impersonal functional imperatives. When all is said and done, if one examines things in depth and not merely their deceitful appearances, fascism, communism and liberal democracy are but epiphenomenal variations of a single historical reality: totalitarian society predicated on the unchallenged and unchangeable domination of the scientific-technological apparatus. This is because what alienates and dehumanizes humanity is science. A typical product of the abstract intellect which fragments what was originally united — the totality of the real, understood as a teleological process — science produces the opposite of what it promises: it does not free but subjugates; it does not enlighten but obscures. As such, it is both "an instrument of domination" and "false consciousness."

The West assumed it had to fight a frightful war, costing tens of millions of human lives, in order to stop Nazi totalitarianism from obliterating freedoms and rights laboriously gained in the last two centuries. Thanks to Marcuse, it is now clear that what has been defended is something rather insignificant: "a comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic

30. *Ibid.*, p. 289.

31. Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 3.

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unfreedom prevails in advanced industrial civilization, a token of technological progress"[32] enlivened by the illusion of popular sovereignty and based entirely on satisfying "false needs" cleverly implanted by the omnipotent managers of the system. Similarly, because of the "concentration of political and economic power," the "supressing the alternatives" and the use of "technology as an instrument of domination," "effective dissent is blocked"[33] and free societies are not less repressive than communist ones. The only difference, if one may speak of differences, is that in free societies violent repression has been substituted by hidden oppression, thanks to which its members are astutely manipulated in such a way that they are psychologically inclined to accept willingly their condition as slaves.

It should be emphasized that, along with Adorno and Horkheimer, Marcuse holds that the "totalitarian universe of technological rationality is the latest transmutation of the idea of Reason."[34] In other words, what leads to the "repressive society" is Enlightenment culture which, rather than freeing men, imprisons them in a system in which "technology has become the great vehicle of reification."[35] Concerning this, Marcuse has no doubts: it is "false reason" — obtuse and dogmatic enlightenment reason — that has led people to that "the wrong organization"[36] of the productive forces and of social relations which hypocritically defines itself as a "free society." As such, Marcuse proposes an updated version of the Platonic allegory of the cave. Convinced that he knows the "only truth and the only practice capable of changing the world," he sees himself entrusted with the historical mission to release the victims of capitalist-bourgeois manipulation from "false consciousness" and to point the way to freedom from the "opulent society," which leads them to obsessively pursue the satisfaction of "false needs."[37] There is one significant difference: while Plato felt obliged to sketch out a picture of a "good society," Marcuse, mystically convinced that negation is the creative principle and moving force of reality, claims that in order to create a society in conformity with the true sense (*logos*) of life, it is sufficient to demolish the given reality.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
33. Herbert Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance," in Robert F. Wolf, Barrington Moore Jr. and Herbert Marcuse, *The Critique of Pure Tolerance* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), p. 83.
34. Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, *op. cit.*, p. 123.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

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III

The Frankfurt School reading of modern culture leads one to agree with Nietzsche that "the Enlightenment provokes indignation."[38] The Enlightenment does proclaim "freedom of religion," but at the same time, with its devastating criticism of every form of animism, it destroys the "enchanted consciousness" and leads to a situation in which, as Max Weber put it, men are condemned to live "without God and without prophets."[39] This is why those thirsting for the absolute (including "critical theorists," God's true orphans, obsessed with what Horkheimer, in a rare moment of lucidity, called the "nostalgia for the totally Other") can only feel horrified by the spread of the Enlightenment, which gradually creates a form of collective life "without sacred values."[40] Hence, their violent attack on modernity, seen as a perverse triumph of material over spiritual civilization.[41] Modernity, however, cannot be reduced to the unlimited development of the productive forces and to the scientific-technological manipulation of nature. It is not only a *Zivilisation* but also a *Kultur*. More precisely, it is a civilization *sui generis*, whose essential traits are: 1) elective action; 2) the rule of law; 3) universalization of the rights of citizens; 4) the institutionalization of change; 5) cultural secularization; 6) the autonomy of subsystems; and 7) rationalization.

Elective action is perhaps the most typical feature of modernity. Since tradition has an irresistible normative power, in traditional society elective action is reduced to a minimum. Tradition rules over everything and everyone and determines the status and responsibilities of every individual. A paradigmatic example is Sparta. As Plutarch relates, even the members of the ruling class had no freedom of choice. The freedom of

38. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Al di là del Bene e del Male," in *Opere* (Rome: Casini, 1955), Vol. 1, p. 684.

39. Max Weber, *La Scienza come Professione* (Rome: Armando, 1997), p. 74.

40. José Ortega y Gasset, *Una Interpretazione della Storia Universale* (Milan: SurgarCo, Milano, 1978), p. 142.

41. Interestingly enough, Critical Theory's view of modernity is identical with that of Heidegger and Evola. For the former, "from a metaphysical viewpoint, i.e., concerning their mundane character and their relation with spirit, Russia and America balanced each other." See Martin Heidegger, *Introduzione alla Metafisica* (Milan: Mursia, 1990), p. 55. For the latter, they were none other than "two faces of the same thing" in as far as "intellectual standardization, conformism, obligatory normalization and large organization were typical American phenomena, but they correspond to the Soviet ideal of collectively valid state thinking." See *Rivolta contra il Mondo Moderno* (Rome: Edizioni Mediterranee, 1984), pp. 431 and 426. While Heidegger and Evola were aware of being nostalgic for the sacred society, Adorno and Horkheimer remain caught in a total "false consciousness": they thought they were progressives, while they were actually thoroughgoing reactionaries.

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moderns, the freedom to plan one's own life, was unknown to Spartans. They knew only collective freedom, i.e., the right to participate in political decisions. Obviously, that made Spartan culture programmatically holistic, whereas modern culture is programmatically individualistic.

An individualistic culture must be particularly sensitive to the rights of individuals before state and society. Such rights must be formally recognized and materially guaranteed. This is possible only if public power is structured in such a way that it has limits, i.e., only if it is not all-powerful and is subject to precise rules. In other words, individualistic culture requires a government based on the rule of law — the only type of government before which individual rights can be upheld.

This means that modern society is not composed of subjects but of citizens, i.e., those governed are endowed with a set of inalienable rights they themselves guarantee by participating directly or indirectly in legislation and political decision. Safeguarding elective action and individual rights is connected to the idea of participation and, in turn, to democracy, which in a sense is the "natural" political organization of a modern society. The universalization of these rights (civil, political and social) is not an automatic phenomenon but, rather, the product of the struggles of those "excluded" to broaden the bourgeois perimeter of liberal-democracy. In this sense, "the class struggle" — not to be confused with "class war" — is an integral part of modern society understood as a conflictual society, i.e., one based on the institutionalization of the polemical confrontation of interests and values.

All this, especially the primacy of elective over prescriptive action, makes modern society dynamic, permanently embroiled in turmoil and in perpetual transformation. People living in traditional societies, subjugated as they are to the impersonal imperatives of *traditio*, have little or no choice to modify existing normative structures which, in addition to being all pervasive, are imbued with a sanctity which renders them untouchable, since the sacred is "what is specifically unchangeable."[42] Typically, the ideal of traditional society is to avoid any changes threatening its "miraculously" achieved equilibrium. This does not mean that traditional societies are completely frozen, but that innovations can be legitimated only at a cost: that they be presented as conforming to the "way of the fathers." Thus, the creativity of a traditional society is orthogenetic in nature and never, or almost never, heterogenetic. Old India provides one of the most

42. Max Weber, *Economia e Società* (Milan: Comunità, 1978), Vol. II, p. 111.

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clear and obvious examples of the hostility of traditional society to change. It intentionally sought immobility, i.e., a society "fixed" once and for all, and its intellectual *élites*, the brahmen, the professional guardians of the sacred unchangeable tradition, have always regarded moving away from the "eternal yesterday" as a serious sin. On the other hand, modern society considers change a value to be pursued methodically and relentlessly. This is true not only in technology and economics, but also in fashion, philosophy, artistic styles and axiological codes. Modernity is dominated by an unquestionable craving for the new. It loves novelty as much as traditional civilization hates it.

As a result, modern society does not regard tradition as an intangible legacy, but as a set of techniques, institutions, modes of behavior and values to be continually modified, renewed, challenged and even rejected. For modern society, tradition is not sacred. This is because the sacred is not pervasive in it as in traditional societies, but has limited jurisdiction. Thus modern society is secular. This does not mean it has no room for religion. Rather, it is a society in which the intellectual and moral direction is not something exclusively entrusted to professional guardians of the "sacred science," as in traditional societies where temporal and spiritual power is typically fused and confused.

This leads to the sixth constitutive element of modernity, the autonomy of subsystems. The shrinking of the sacred sphere and the weakening of its normative power means that social practices become independent of hieratic institutions and tend to regulate themselves not on the basis of external codes but on those expressing specific endogenous needs. The result is that the economy, science, philosophy, art, etc., are structured as relatively autonomous subsystems. This is why the spirit of modernity can be summed up by the formulae "art for art's sake," "economy for the economy's sake," "science for science's sake", etc.

In this process of emancipation of social practices from religious imperatives and from hieratic institutions, the spontaneous self-regulation of the economy, i.e., the capitalist revolution, is decisive. This revolution presupposses a crucial requirement: rationalization as calculability and subordination of productive and distributive processes to the impersonal imperatives of *ratio*. Furthermore, capitalist rationalization is not limited to the economy. It also affects behavior and thought. It generates a Promethean culture that sees the entire world as a gigantic machine to control, manipulate, exploit and transform. It is both a fascinating and disturbing phenomenon, which has led to prodigious results in technology,

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knowledge and production. It has also generated several important aberrations, the most obvious being global mercantilization, which tends to transform society into a gigantic *catalactic* system subjugated to the impersonal tyranny of supply and demand.[43]

IV

What structural conditions made possible the birth, consolidation and development of modern civilization? They can be summarized under the heading of "the autonomy of civil society." This autonomy is possible only within the framework of a social organization in which at least part of economic resources are managed within a competitive system. This means that the material basis of a civil society is the market. This is not only true historically, but also logically.[44] In fact, an autonomous civil society is unimaginable if the state controls directly or indirectly what Marx called the "fountains of life," i.e., the means of production. In addition, without the market there can be no "open society." By definition, the market is a system without borders, which "forces" people to escape their traditional mental barriers, forces them to communicate with other cultures and to enter into a system of relations in which what is exchanged is not just commodities but also ideas, values, techniques and institutions. In other words, *catalactic* logic is a potent factor in cultural hybridization and universalization. Thanks to it, the "spiritual products of individual nations become a common inheritance."[45] It is also a powerful stimulus for change and secularization since it operates as a permanent revolution before which "all stable and rusted conditions of life, with their entourage of opinions and beliefs made vulnerable by age, are dissolved" and "everything sacred is defaced."[46] Thus, as the *catalactic* logic gradually extends its sphere of action, society tends to become a gigantic laboratory in which all kinds of experiments are carried out and change becomes a normal state of affairs.

A quick survey of the evolution of Western civilization confirms this analysis.[47] Modernization, i.e., the transition from a "closed" to an

43. Cf. Cario Mongardini, *Economia come Ideologia* (Milan: Angeli, 1997), pp. 21ff.

44. See Gino Germani, *Sociology of Modernization* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1981).

45. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engel, "Manifesto del Partito Comunista," in *Opere Complete* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1970), Vol. VI, pp. 490ff.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 489.

47. Luciano Pellicani, *The Genesis of Capitalism and the Origins of Modernity* (New York: Telos Press, 1994); *Modernizzazione e Secolarizzazione* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1997); *Le Sorgenti della Vita. Modi di Produzione e Forme di Dominio* (Rome: Seam, 1997).

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"open" society, took place as a result of the revolution in the communes where, by breaking the rule of the nobility, it led to the re-emergence of the city-state and gave the proto-bourgeois class a chance to construct and launch a market economy. This led not only to the prodigious development of the forces of production but also, and more importantly, to the birth of civil society, which has gradually become entrenched to the point of successfully checkmating the natural despotic tendencies of public power. This has generated the dialectic of "state vs. civil society," which step by step has led to the creation of those institutions and values typical of the secular city. At the same time, with the exception of Japan and to the extent that they have remained imprisoned in the Weberian "iron cage," Eastern societies have not experienced modernity. They have known only one form of domination: bureaucratic-managerial despotism which, by preventing the exploration of the unlimited "world of the possible," has kept them within the confines of tradition, from which they have emerged only after they were traumatically overwhelmed by the powerful cultural radiations of modern industrial civilization.

This means that the process of modernization corresponds to the formation of a society which distributes rights — a phenomenon which began in the early Middle Ages and, through thousands of conflicts of interest and values, has led to what Karl Mannheim called a "fundamental democratization,"[48] i.e., the universalization of civil rights. Obviously, without the prodigious development of the productive forces fed by the world market, science and scientifically oriented technology, such universalization would never have been possible. When all is said and done, "modern culture" means a "culture of rights and freedoms." One important qualification, however, is in order: the precondition for economic, scientific and technological development has been the institutionalization of the rights of the governed — first and foremost property rights, which led to the separation of political and economic power and therefore the autonomy of civil society.

V

The Soviet system has been the opposite of the secular city. The Bolshevik Revolution: 1) eliminated elective action by institutionalizing the ideological dictatorship of the party-state; 2) annihilated the autonomy of civil society by expropriating the means of production; 3) blocked the process of secularization by elevating Marxism to the level of a compulsory

48. Karl Mannheim, *Uomo e Società in una Età di Ricostruzione* (Milan: Comunità, 1965).

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state orthodoxy; 4) prevented the passage from a "society of subjects" to a "society of citizens"; 5) obliterated whatever rule of law the Tsarist regime had institutionalized in order to launch industrialization; 6) eradicated *ratio*, whose institutional basis is the market: and 7) dried up the sources of hetereogenetic creativity. In short, the Bolshevik Revolution was a titanic effort to stop the invasion of Western culture. With the sole exception of scientific and technological know-how, it sought to expel all the constitutive elements of modernity from Russian society. It sought to absorb the material culture of modern civilization, while at the same time rejecting its spiritual culture and its institutional model by redefining the concepts of liberty, equality, secularization, citizenship, democracy, etc. in a way antithetical to how they were understood in the West. While claiming to want to learn from advanced industrialized countries in order to encourage the development of productive forces, the Bolsheviks demonized the values and institutions of "Western decay" and, by raising an insuperable political and ideological barrier, prevented their penetration into Russian society. Thus their revolution was predicated on the conviction that it was possible to launch industrialization without becoming contaminated by possessive individualism and liberalism, leaving the false impression that their aim was modernization. With "scientific" mercilessness they proceeded to purify Russia of everything that came from outside and revitalized, through the semblance of the Third International, the myth of Moscow as "the Third Rome"[49] destined to bring about nothing less than the "resurrection of humanity."[50]

The anti-modern character of the Bolshevik Revolution was clearly understood by the Soviet diplomat S. Dmitrievski, who observed while the Kulaks were being exterminated: "The victory of the peasants inside the country would be a victory for the West and its basic concept of the individualism and liberalism in political life."[51] If the land-owning peasants had not been annihilated, capitalism would have re-emerged spontaneously and, along with it, civil society, the basis of modern civilization. This outcome bothered Lenin's followers since, in the long run, it would have meant the defeat of their project to prevent the political and cultural Westernization of Russia. Not surprisingly, after forced collectivization had been achieved, a

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49. Cf. Nicolai Berdiaev, *L'Idea Russa* (Milan: Mursia, 1992); and *Il Senso e le Premesse del Comunismo Russo* (Rome: Edizioni Roma, 1944).

50. Nicolai Bucharin and Evgheni Preobrazenskii, *Abc del Comunismo* (Rome: Newton Compton, 1975), p. 7.

51. Cited by Mihail Heller and Aleksandr Nekric, *Storia dell'URSS* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1984), p. 281.

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pleased Bucharin wrote that what the Bolsheviks had fought for had finally come about: the "Chinese Wall" separating civil society from the state in Western Europe had been completely razed and Russian society had ceased to have aims different from those of the state.[52] It actually put an end to the Tsarist project of Westernization and brought Russian society back into the "iron cage" of the bureaucratic-managerial state.

The Bolsheviks did seek to accelerate the development of the productive forces. This does not mean, however, that they had the modernization of Russia as their objective. On the contrary, they used industrial power to fight the West, to which they contraposed a model of society hostile to individualism and to secularization. Thus the October Revolution and all those inspired by it were not, as some political scientists have claimed, totalitarian modernizations,"[53] but holistic reactions against the individualism of Western civilization seeking the restoration of "sacred society" through the institutionalization of the idolatrous cult of the charismatic Party.

VI

Yet, the communist revolution was not merely an "Asiatic reaction" against Western civilization. Along with its ape-like imitation, the Nazi Revolution, it pushed its radicalism to the point of becoming a totalitarian system. This should not be confused with despotism, which is a form of domination characterized by the fact that the holder of the monopoly of violence successfully vindicates the irrevocable right to dispose of commodities and the lives of its subjects.[54] The ambitions of the totalitarian state are much greater. As the only interpreter of revolutionary gnosis, the totalitarian state regards itself as entrusted with the historical mission of purifying society by mercilessly annihilating those who corrupt it. This is why what characterizes the totalitarian state is the creation of a "separate world"[55] in which all those the "party of the pures" considers polluters are to be eliminated. This makes the totalitarian state something profoundly

52. Nicolai Bucharin, *Le Vie della Rivoluzione* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1980), p. 253. In this respect, Wittfogel was right in seeing the Bolshevik Revolution as an "Asiatic restoration." See Karl A. Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1957).

53. Cited in John H. Kautsky, *Communism and the Politics of Development* (New York: Wiley, 1968); Samuel F. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968); Robert Daniels, *The Nature of Communism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1962).

54. See Luciano Pellicani, *Rivoluzione e Totalitarismo* (Rome: Pagine, 1992); and *La Società dei Giusti. Parabola Storica dello Gnosticismo Rivoluzionario* (Milan: Etas, 1995).

55. Gustav Herling, *Un Mondo a Parte* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1995).

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different from what Yves Ternon calls "the criminal state."[56] The latter is as old as the state itself — an institution often originating in genocide. The totalitarian state, on the other hand, is a historically unique phenomenon.[57] The institution managing the totalitarian state — the warring order of professional revolutionaries organized along the lines of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) attribute to genocide a cathartic function. Thus the totalitarian state sees itself engaged in a permanent war that will end only when society is cleansed of all of its polluting elements.

A state is totalitarian only to the extent that it sees itself as the charismatic bearer of a palingenetic project. This makes the totalitarian state into a religious institution in the strongest sense of the word.[58] Its goal is collective salvation, which will be achieved when the sources of evil are eradicated: a cathartic operation requiring the isolation and extermination of all those who are "objectively" the source of spiritual contamination.

If this is what constitutes totalitarianism, then Italian fascism does not fully qualify as a totalitarian regimes.[59] Although Benito Mussolini and Giovanni Gentile proudly proclaimed the totalitarian nature of the fascist revolution,[60] the latter did not really generate a totalitarian regime. This happened not only because Mussolini, in order to consolidate his power, adopted an opportunistic policy toward the monarchy; but primarily because fascism did not have a doctrine of collective salvation. To the extent that it did not seek to purify society by exterminating the agents of corruption, it did not create a system of concentration camps. From the very beginning, its totalitarian vocation was limited by

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56. Yves Ternon, *Lo Stato Criminale* (Milan: Corbaccio, 1997).

57. Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (New York: Praeger, 1964), p. 5. Actually, Jacobinism was probably the first totalitarian regime in modern history. See Ferenc Feher, *The Frozen Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

58. This is why Gramsci did not hesitate to define Marxism as "the religion which would kill Christianity" and to claim that, in the course of the construction of the New Order, the "modern Prince" — the party-state — would take the place of the divine and of the categorical imperative. See Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del Carcere* (Turin: Einaudi, 1975), p. 1561. Less elegant but essentially the same is Goebbels' definition of National Socialism: "a religion in the most mystical and profound sense of the word." Cited by I. Golomstock, *Arte Totalitaria* (Milan: Leonardo, 1990), p. 323.

59. For the opposite claim, see Alberto Aquarone, *L'Organizzaione dello Stato Totalitario* (Turin: Einaudi, 1965); and Emilio Gentile, *La Via Italiana al Totalitarismo* (Rome: La Nuova Italia Scientitica, 1995).

60. Cf. A. James Gregor, *The Ideology of Fascism* (New York: The Free Press, 1970); Domenico Settembrini, *Fascismo, Controrivoluzione Imperfetta* (Florence: Sansoni, 1978); Emilio Gentile, *Le Origini dell'Ideologia Fascista* (Bologna: Il Mulino), 1996.

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the fact that its revolutionary program was not palingenetic in character. Here one need only to consult Joseph Goebbels' *Diaries* where it is claimed that Mussolini could not be considered an authentic revolutionary like Hitler and Stalin since he was not "radical" enough. For Goebbels, to be radical meant to be firmly set on eradicating evil by exterminating the agents of corruption — precisely what Hitler and Stalin sought by deploying state terror as a cathartic instrument.[61]

Contrary to the legend spread by the Marxist-Leninist Left after the XXth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union,[62] Stalinism was not a degeneration of Leninism or a system extraneous to the communist tradition. Rather, it was the logical outcome of Lenin's program. In Lenin's writings, the revolution in power has the task to "clean Russian soil of any damaging insects — fleas, scoundrels, bedbugs, the rich, etc."[63] Russia is a "moral morass"[64] that must be disinfected by resorting to "systematic violence against the bourgeoise and its accomplices."[65] This is a merciless operation, but one absolutely necessary if the "greed, the sordid, hateful, frantic greed of the money bags"[66] is to be uprooted. At any rate, what rights have filthy "parasites,"[67] who live like "vampires"[68] feeding on the workers' blood? To eliminate them is a moral duty. Lenin's chilling "moral legacy" is consistent with all this. In 1922, he wrote to Stalin: "we will purify Russia for a long time."[69] In the same year, he sent Kutsky the following brutally frank instructions: "To highlight a thesis of principle, correct on the political level (and not just in a strictly juridical sense), motivating the essence and justification of terror, its necessity and its limits. The tribunal must not eliminate terror; to promise that would mean deluding oneself and others; it must be justified

61. Cf. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966), p. 428.

62. This legend is far from dead. After recognizing that a "mass society brainwashed under the watchful eye of Big Brother was the goal Stalin would have liked to achieve," Eric Hobsbawm calmly adds that "it would have shocked Lenin and the other old Bolsheviks, not to mention Marx." See his *The Age of Extremes* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994), p. 460. Evidently, here Hobsbawm must be relying on rumors and commonplaces. Even a quick scan of Lenin's *Collected Works* makes it clear that he theorized the totalitarian and terroristic control of the extermination machinery he had created.

63. Lenin, *Opere Complete* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1955), Vol. XXVI, p. 394.

64. *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 327.

65. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXVI, p. 384.

66. *Ibid.*

67. *Ibid.*

68. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXVIII, p. 53.

69. Cited in Dimitri Volkogonov, *Le Vrai Lenine* (Paris: Laffont, 1995), p. 213.

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and legitimated on the level of principles, clearly, without falsity and without embellishments. The formulation must be as wide as possible, since only revolutionary justice and revolutionary consciousness will decide the conditions of its more or less long application."[70]

According to Lenin, having achieved the "bloody extermination of the rich,"[71] the Bolshevik Party had to institutionalize a permanent civil war. The declared objective was the "implacable annihilation"[72] of the petty bourgeoisie and the land-owning peasants. Here Lenin's prose is brutally frank once again. Immediately after adopting the NEP to avoid the total collapse of production, he wrote: "The enemy is no longer a horde of white guards at the command of the big landowners, supported by all the Mensheviks, the Social Revolutionaries and the international bourgeoisie. The enemy today is the daily economic reality of a country of small peasants, a country in which big industry is in ruins. The enemy today is the petty bourgeois element that surrounds us like the air and penetrates deeply into the files of the proletariat."[73] Thus the "final struggle" — an expression that in the Bolshevik lingo had the same meaning as the "final solution" for the Nazis — had to be unleashed against small entrepreneurs who grow into large entrepreneurs and thus become potential regenerators of capitalism. This was because Lenin was convinced that "small industry incessantly generated capitalism and the bourgeoisie, every day, every hour, spontaneously and on a mass scale."[74] Hence, his declaration of war against the small entrepreneur: "The Kulak is a ferocious enemy of Soviet power. Either the Kulaks will exterminate an infinite number of workers, or the workers will implacably crush the Kulaks' revolts. There cannot be a middle road. . . . The struggle against the Kulaks is the decisive and final struggle . . . . The Kulaks are the most ferocious, brutal, savage exploiters. . . . These poisonous spiders have fattened up at the expense of the peasants ruined by the war, at the expense of starving workers. These bloodsuckers have drunk the blood of the peasants, getting richer as workers suffered from hunger in the cities and in the factories. These vampires have grabbed and continue to grab the land . . . and enslave poor peasants once again. Implacable war against these Kulaks. To the death! Hate and loathing

70. Lenin, *Opere Complete*, *op. cit.*, vol.XXXIII, p. 325.
71. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXVI, p. 354.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 451.
73. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXXIII, p. 11.
74. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXXI, p. 14.

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towards the parties that defend them: right-wing Social Revolutionaries, Mensheviks and the present left-wing social-revolutionaries. The workers must put down the revolts of the Kulaks with an iron hand."[75]

A terrorist state, the communist state is also permanently mobilized both on the internal as well as the external front: internally, in order to eradicate what Bucharin used to call the "spontaneity of the capillarily-diffused petty bourgeois," but also externally, since the final aim of the palingenic revolution cannot deviate from the "global dictatorship of the proletariat."[76] Otherwise, the omnipresent and omnipervasive bourgeois spirit would return to infect those men tirelessly regenerated by the "party of the pures." In short, the peculiar nature of the communist project — to "clean up the spectral old world"[77] on the basis of the Satanic principle that "everything that exists must perish"[78] — requires that the "new society" be organized as a "fortress under siege" and that in it everything be organized along military lines.[79] Furthermore, it requires the annihilation of all external powers that, by their mere presence, prevent the "reconstruction of the world"[80] through the reshaping of "human material created by bloody and filthy capitalism."[81]

The sacred texts of the revolutionary gnosis prefigure a model of the state which is the exact opposite of the modern state. According to Marx' and Engels' classical definition, the modern state "has civil society as a natural base, the individual of civil society, i.e., the independent person, bound to others only by the link of private interest, of unconscious natural necessity, the slave of work for profit, the slave both of selfish need and the selfish needs of others. In the universal rights of man, the modern state recognizes that this is its natural foundation: . . . modern, civil society, the society of industry, of general competition, of private interests all freely pursuing their aims, of anarchy, of natural and spiritual individuality."[82]

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75. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXVIII, p. 53.
76. Nicolai Bucharin, *Economia del Periodo di Trasformazione* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1971), p. 170.
77. Karl Marx, "Il Diciotto Brumaio di Luigi Bonaparte," in *Opere Complete*, *op. cit.*, Vol. XI, p. 115.
78. Friedrich Engels, *Ludovico Feuerbach e il Punto di Arrivo della Filosofia Classica Tedesca*, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Opere Scelte* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1969), p. 1106.
79. Bucharin, *Le Vie della Rivoluzione*, *op. cit.*, p. 84.
80. Antonio Gramsci, *L'Ordine Nuovo* (Turin: Einaudi, 1975), p. 9.
81. Lenin, *Opere Complete*, Vol. XXVIII, p. 392.
82. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "La Sacra Famiglia," in *Opere Complete*, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 126 and 136.

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While the modern state is based on law and acknowledges the autonomy of civil society, the communist state is "bound by no law."[83] It pursues, with all the means at its disposal and at whatever cost, the annihilation of the corrupt and corrupting petty bourgeois. That subsequently the Soviet state obsessively pursued the development of its productive forces by using the scientific and technological know-how created by Western civilization does not mean that it has been, as many continue to believe, a totalitarian variant of the modern state.[84] It only means that the Bolshevik Party sought to create an industrial economy by adopting a political organization which, in a masterful essay written immediately after the Bolshevik Revolution and anticipating Wittfogel's thesis, Marcel Mauss defined as "byzantine."[85] However, an industrial economy directed by a "byzantine" state, one characterized by bureaucratic centralism, the administrative control of production and distribution, the lack of guarantees, etc., is a contradiction in terms. In order for an economy to undertake self-propelling development, certain juridical pre-conditions are essential. These can be fully guaranteed only by the modern constitutional state. Of course, such a take-off is possible even within the context of an authoritarian political system. Yet the politics of development have succeeded only in countries where the state has recognized property rights, has allowed private parties ample freedom to buy and sell, and circumscribed its jurisdiction in order to allow the full application of the law of supply and demand. All of this was categorically rejected under a communism controlled by the myth of the superior rationality of the central plan. As a result, there was an economic bankruptcy of global dimensions, which has shown that it is not possible to institutionalize the means of industrial production by destroying the market and suffocating the spontaneous development of civil society.[86] This means that the totalitarian state, which "corrects, plans and constructs all on the basis of a single criterion"[87] and has as its

83. Lenin, *Opere Complete*, *op. cit.*, Vol. XXVIII, p. 241.

84. See, e.g., Jacques Bidet, *Teoria della Modernità* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1992).

85. Marcel Mauss, "Apprezzamento Sociologico del Bolscevismo," in *Controcorrente* (1975), No. 1.

86. The Nazi strategy while in power was rather different. It institutionalized what Ernst Fraenkel called the *doppel Staat* — a unique combination of state regulation of the economy and state discretion in politics — since its leaders realized that industrial development required that the market not be subject to the imperatives of revolutionary ideology. As long as it lasted, this incoherence provided the Nazi economy with a rationality the Soviet economy was not able to match, precisely because it was rigorously constructed according to Marxist-Leninist gnosticism.

87. Lenin, *Opere Complete*, *op. cit.*, Vol.XXXI, p.351.

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objective the regeneration of the social body through "a war of extermination"[88] against every form of spontaneity, is not only incompatible with modernization but also with industrialization.

The conclusion must be drawn that totalitarianism is not a manifestation of modern instrumental rationality but, on the contrary, a type of domination in which, to the extent that it remains true to its vocation of destroying "all forms of capitalism,"[89] is bound to clash with *ratio*. This is obvious as soon as one realizes that *ratio* is closely and inextricably tied to the market[90] and that in order to carry out its role as a propelling force of development, the latter needs "laws that can be applied like a machine."[91] But abstract rational law is precisely what the totalitarian state cannot tolerate. The soteriological mission with which it sees itself entrusted — the purification of society through cathartic terror — is incompatible "with any material or formal limitation of its power. Therefore, permanent conflict between the functional imperatives of *ratio* and the ideological imperatives of the Party, which typified the concrete *modus operandi* of communist states — a conflict that, in the long run, resulted in what has been called the "Grand Failure."[92] This was not a historical accident attributable to the unfavorable circumstances or human error but the inevitable outcome of a program of social reconstruction based on permanent war against the values and the institutions of modern civilization.

88. *Ibid.*, Vol. IX, p. 360.

89. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXVI, p. 451. The concept of revolution found in Goebbels' speeches is not all that different from Lenin's: "To Strike down the old world and construct a new one . . . to destroy in order to have a new creation: everything, to the last stone." Cited by Rhodes, *The Hitler Movement*, op. cit., p. 105.

90. Cf. Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1963).

91. Max Weber, *Storia Economica* (Rome: Donzelli, 1996), p. 298.

92. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Failure* (New York, 1989).

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Modernity, Libertarianism and Critical Theory: Reply to Pellicani

Alex Delfini and Paul Piccone

Sociological Speculations and Political Opportunism

The impact of the end of the Cold War has yet to be felt in the social sciences which, by and large, opportunistically continue to defend the viability of theoretically useless constructs whose popularity has nothing to do with incisiveness or coherence but, rather, with their historical role in providing political legitimacy for particular regimes. There is no better example of this than the concept of "totalitarianism."[1] It was first crafted by Giovanni Gentile and Benito Mussolini in the mid-1920s to describe a fascism that never fit the proposed definition; subsequently it was elaborated by Franz Neumann and later Hannah Arendt in the (unsuccessful) attempt to make sense

1. The dismissal of "totalitarianism" as a theoretically useless concept does not necessarily translate into a legitimation of the regimes this concept was meant to describe. Rather, it paves the way for a rigorous reconsideration of Stalinism and Nazism as integral parts of a far from concluded epochal development — the advent of modernity — beyond Manichean post-Cold War interpretations of the Cold War (traditionally popular within conservative circles), or demagogic liberal readings of "totalitarianism" as the result of mere "democratic deficits" (i.e., not enough of that same "democracy" liberalism itself progressively marginalizes in the West). In zealously indicting "totalitarianism" as something altogether foreign to liberal democracy, both of these self-serving accounts ultimately end up occluding the more fundamental cultural kinship of all three political systems. Thus, despite the fact that both Nazism and Stalinism are now closed historical chapters, the threat of social involution remains. This has nothing to do with any possible resurgence of either of these two now defunct regimes (since history does not repeat itself), but with the normal unfolding of modernist logic and the changes it necessitates within liberal democratic systems. Of course, analyses of Stalinism, Nazism and the New Deal as different manifestations of the same, more general phenomenon of modernity are not new. For a seminal discussion, see Friedrick Pollock's 1940 article, "State Capitalism," now reprinted in Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt, eds., *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (New York: Continuum, 1978), pp. 71-94.

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of the despicable practices of Nazi Germany (and, almost as an afterthought, of the Soviet Union), and eventually by Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *et al.*, all the way down to Jeanne Kirkpatrick's redefinition of the concept in terms of a regime's alleged unreformability, in order to demonize communism as a foe susceptible only to military annihilation — on the very eve of the peaceful reform of the entire Soviet bloc.

Even Herbert Marcuse and the rest of the Frankfurt School used "totalitarianism" to describe the involution of modernity resulting from the generalization of reification and the "technicization" of society. Predicated on the permanent integration of all opposition within an increasingly "irrational" system of domination, the association of "totalitarianism" and modernity was made possible only by an indefinite linear extension of the predominant conditions of postwar American society. To the extent that by the 1950s Marcuse had replaced the Heideggerian phenomenological foundation (deployed in his youth to reground an increasingly sclerotic Marxist project) with a naturalistic Freudian theory of instincts, he was no longer able to catch the "historicity" of advanced industrial societies and realize how it thrived only by gradually destroying the conditions necessary for its own reproducibility.[2] This naturalistic grounding generated a dogmatic distinction between "true" and "false" needs, which not only degraded his critique into another version of New Class ideology privileging critical theorists as the Cassandras of one-dimensional society, but also projected the possibility of a "totalitarian" involution by overestimating the culture

2. While well aware of the therapeutic function of criticism in reinforcing and perpetuating the predominant logic of domination, to the point of sponsoring internal opposition to function as internal control mechanisms, Marcuse's Freudianism prevented him from drawing the conclusions that, far from being stable and self-sufficient, the system was parasitic on its cultural foundations for effective social reproduction and, to the extent that it gradually eroded them, eventually tended to destroy itself. Instead, the psychoanalytic involution led him to translate the traditional Christian paradise (already transubstantiated into the classless society) into a perennial play-pen of polymorphous perversion, and left his academic acolytes with the legacy of a hyper-rationalist ideology not all that different from orthodox Marxism: an ideology of wannabe New Class *apparatchiks* managing "true needs" and "new sensibilities." See, e.g., Isaac D. Balbus, "The Missing Dimension: Self-Reflexivity and the "New Sensibility," in John Bokina and Timothy J. Lukes, *Marcuse: From the New Left to the Next Left* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1994), pp. 106-117. Efforts to embellish this crude biologism reducing all to the immediacy of eros by introjecting theoretical epicycles such as object relations theory (to emphasize other basic human features such as "respect" and "recognition") remain unconvincing, at least as long as they remain trapped within a naturalistic framework. For such a remedial maneuver, see C. Fred Alford, "Marx, Marcuse and Psychoanalysis: Do They Still Fit After All These Years?" in Bokina and Lukes, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-146.

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industry's ability to manipulate the instinctual domain.[3]

As Robert D'Amico has shown, all these exercises in ideological fabrication are deeply flawed. Not only do they not explain the rise of "totalitarian" regimes, but they fail to make a convincing argument for the uniqueness of the phenomena in question. In the overwhelming majority of cases, they end up elaborating "fictional or purely rhetorical possibilities" which have little to do with concrete historical instances.[4] This does not mean that, as a Cold War relic, the concept of "totalitarianism" is likely to disappear any time soon. It can still play a negative legitimating role for the ruling elites of liberal-democratic societies. No longer able to rely on the collective threat of communism to generate a kind of theoretical state of emergency justifying the postponement of any critical scrutiny of what has become of the liberal-democratic system, i.e., a less-than-perfect managerial state not qualitatively different from the "totalitarian" foe it allegedly has vanquished, these ruling elites are now increasingly suspected of operating within the same ideological universe. While incommensurable with either fascism or communism in terms of repression and the disregard of personal freedoms, liberal democratic regimes have gradually turned into benevolent versions of bureaucratic-centralist systems run by a privileged New Class of functionaries, politicians and other "professionals." The control and management of everyday life now entrusted to this New Class increasingly subverts the conditions necessary for democratic participation. The degradation of previously engaged citizens to the

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3. This pessimistic outcome, however, is rejected by unreconstructed Marxists posing as critical theorists, who insist, incoherently, on the continuity of democracy and "liberation." As the unpublished material now kept in the Marcuse's archives in Frankfurt readily shows, Marcuse was much more coherent and became skeptical about democracy very early on, roughly at the time he began to flirt with psychoanalysis. See Douglas Kellner, "A Marcuse Renaissance?" in Bokina and Lukes, *Marcuse*, *op. cit.*, pp. 245-267. If it was a matter of determining true and false interests (or true or false needs) and the philosopher is best suited to the task of establishing what they are, then democracy becomes either superfluous or counterproductive for, as Kellner acknowledges, it may lead to fascism (p. 255). It is unclear, therefore, on what basis Kellner and other Marcusians can argue that "Critical Theory today should place more emphasis on democracy" (p. 262) as a vehicle for realizing truly "rational" objectives as Marcusean counter-New Class ideologues define them. For a prefiguration of this critique, see Paul Piccone and Alex Delfini, "Herbert Marcuse's Heideggerian Marxism," in *Telos* 6 (Fall 1970), pp. 36-46.

4. Robert D'Amico, "The Myth of the Totally Administered Society," in *Telos* 88 (Summer 1991), p. 94. D'Amico cites a revealing passage from George F. Kennan, which applies to most accounts of "totalitarianism," where Kennan confesses that his image of totalitarianism is not a generalization derived from his personal experiences of either Nazi or Soviet atrocities, but from literary accounts by Orwell, Kafka or Koestler (p. 84).

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status of passive clients increasingly dependent on the bureaucratic apparatus paves the way for new and improved versions of "Big Brother," even if in benign garb.

Thus, it is expedient not only to reiterate *ad nauseam* the obvious concerning how much worse the now defunct competing regimes have been, but also to interpret any proposals for possible alternatives to, or substantial modifications of, the *status quo* as variations of the failed experiments of the recent past. This may also help explain why sociologists and other high priests of modernity often insist on recycling the concept of totalitarianism to preempt any possible critique of society that does not priviledge the immediacy of the given — the conformist acceptance of verifiable accounts of "what is" as the only criterion of "what should be" — and dismiss as ideological and tendentially totalitarian any proposal for radical social reconstruction of "the institutions of modern civilization," i.e., predominant relations of domination.[5]

This is the kind of strategy Luciano Pellicani employs in his indignant critique of Zygmunt Bauman in particular and the Frankfurt School in general for having dared to associate modernity and totalitarianism.[6] By recycling "totalitarianism" and a whole series of other even more indefensible concepts from the now obsolete ideological arsenal of the Cold War sociology of a generation or so ago, he indulges in yet another standard apology for liberal democracy as "this, the best of all possible systems." Although, along with most other liberal devotees of Enlightenment ideology, he acknowledges, in passing, the nihilistic implications of the predominant tendency of "modern civilization" to reduce all to the "cash nexus" — what he calls "a gigantic *catalactic* system subjugated to the impersonal tyranny of supply and demand" — he does not hesitate to celebrate liberal democracy as "the natural political organization of a modern

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5. Thus, despite its theoretical incoherence and lack of clarity, today "totalitarianism" remains a viable ideological prop not only for self-congratulatory liberal legitimations of the *status quo*, but as an intellectual decoy preventing a distanced re-examination of complex phenomena such as fascism, Nazism and, most of all, bureaucratic centralism, as different *modernist* variations of the same process of cultural involution that Western society has experienced throughout the 20th century. For a particularly demagogic maneuver that recycles "fascism" as if it were a real option today, see Richard J. Golsen, ed., *Fascism's Return: Scandal, Revision, and Ideology Since 1980* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998). There the objective is to demonize, and thus make it difficult to understand, many of the new and often confused European opposition movements by branding them all terminally right-wing, authoritarian and, therefore, dismising them as mere extensions of a fascist "totalitarian threat" altogether foreign to liberal democracy.

6. Luciano Pellicani, "Modernity and Totalitarianism," in this issue of *Telos*.

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society": an ideal self-correcting system identifiable with "modernity" as such.[7] Whatever problems may remain within such a system are casually dismissed as having to do with the completion of the project of modernity. They are mere details, such as bringing within "the bourgeois perimeter of liberal democracy" those who remain "excluded," and mopping up the last obstacles on the way of achieving the modernist equivalent of Nirvana.

"Totalitarian" Modernity?

According to Pellicani, what is most outrageous in Bauman's and the Frankfurt School's critiques of modernity is the very suggestion that it is itself "totalitarian." Unlike really totalitarian systems, such as Nazism and Stalinism, which allegedly subordinated rationality to the pretenses of ideology, modern societies are seen as characterized by the impersonal domination of *ratio* — something fundamentally incompatible with any kind of society driven by arbitrary *Weltanschauungen*. Totalitarianism is the result of a "revolutionary gnosis" seeking to realize a palingenetic project by purging society of all those corrupting elements identified as the *fons et origo malorum*: capitalists, Jews, Kulaks, etc. Pellicani cites Jeffrey Herf's *Reactionary Modernism* to support his claim that, whatever rationality the Nazis deployed in carrying out their genocidal project, it was subverted by the pretenses of ideology. Unfortunately, this Manichean fabrication is predicated on a fundamental misunderstanding of why and when *Weltanschauungen* came into being and how they relate to *ratio*. A more careful examination of the genesis and development of the

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7. Surprisingly, today it is not unusual to find nihilism identified as an unavoidable feature of modernity — an acceptable price to pay for the displacement of tradition. Worse yet, that market which only a few years ago conformist "fellow travelling" intellectuals, mesmerized by "the inevitability of socialism," routinely indicted as the source of the problem, is now openly celebrated as a legitimate substitute for the traditional divinity. Cf. Walter Minella, "Su Modernità e Nichilismo," in *Modernizzazione e Sviluppo*, Vol. 7, No.1-2 (1996), p. 119. Unlike in Carl Schmitt's political theology, where the traditional Catholic God ends up displaced by the modern state, in libertarian political theology it is the Protestant God which, unmediated by the Church, turns into an anonymous market, whose "grace" or "providence" is now transubstantiated into the "hidden hand" constantly fine-tuning the economy. What Minella, Pellicani and other born-again libertarians fail to realize is the extent to which the nihilism they now so readily acknowledge as the unavoidable product of modernity undermines the rationality and autonomous decision-making capacity of that *homo oeconomicus* without which the market cannot function. Translated into the arcane Marxist terminology of "alienation" and "reification," this nihilism gradually triggers once again that very logic whose unfolding Marx traced in *Capital* to the eventual destruction of the market and all the "superstructural" institutions that libertarians see as mechanically related to it.

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concept of ideology would have revealed that *Weltanschauungen* are not aberrations foreign to "the impersonal domination of *ratio*," but their necessary complement.[8] They are paradigmatic post-Enlightenment innovations necessitated by the dismissal of traditions as dogmatic superstitions, and the subsequent attempt to fill the resulting axiological vacuum with arbitrary "rational" constructs. Thus, to brand Nazism and Stalinism as *Weltanschauungen* concedes precisely what is being denied, i.e., their Enlightenment and rationalist pedigree.[9]

Modernist theology has always idolized "reason" as the only legitimate authority. Yet this reason does not itself have any *rationalist* foundations.[10] *Ratio* is contentless. Thus, any authority it may claim must derive from extraneous non-rational sources: precisely those traditions sedimented everywhere and that the Enlightenment had sought to discredit, or their secularized equivalents. Consequently, any society or system of thought claiming to be based solely on reason, whether it acknowledges it or not, must rely on borrowed sedimented meanings and values from elsewhere in order to provide any direction both to its members as well as to the ruling apparatus. A rationalism unsupported by any extraneous axiological framework unavoidably ends up being either vacuous, in that

8. See George Lichtheim, *The Concept of Ideology and Other Essays* (New York: Vintage, 1967), pp. 3-46.

9. The very concept of *Weltanschauung* developed in Germany in the late 18th century at the dawn of the German Enlightenment and as a result of the crisis of traditional outlooks. See "Weltanschauung und Weltordnung im deutschen Idealismus," in Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhart Kosellek, eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992), Vol. 7, pp. 471-477.

10. As Quentin Lauer put it: "rationalism itself . . . has a non-rational foundation, in the sense that it must begin with an act of faith in reason (for which there is no *reason*) . . ." See "Introduction" to Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, tr. with an Introduction by Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 26. Even Husserl, the most rationalist of all rationalists, did not hesitate to indict this Enlightenment *ratio* as an aberration, whose lack of foundations had led to objectivism, the occlusion of the original motivating teleology and of that subjectivity responsible for the launching of the entire cultural project, resulting in the crisis of "European science" in particular and of modernity in general (*Ibid.*, pp. 91-92). Although Husserl's standard remedy was the deployment of a more radical phenomenological rationalism, as Lauer points out, he himself was not explicitly aware of the fact that the axiological foundation upon which this project rested, the domain of the *doxa*, is not a neutral or universally given domain, but a *particular* and historical one, culturally constituted. This may explain why, toward the end of his life, he grudgingly acknowledged that, as far as his project of a rigorous, apodictic rationalism was concerned, "the dream is over." See Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, tr. by David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), pp. 389-90.

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nothing substantive can follow from it, or incoherent, since if it does entail anything substantive, it can only do so by deploying enthymemes.[11]

To the extent that, in a typically modernist fashion, the Frankfurt School also unwarrantedly hypostatized reason — even if only its negative "dialectical" version — in the unsuccessful attempt to mediate between the part and the whole, and to undercut the authority of tradition, it was ultimately unable to draw the ultimate logical conclusions of its critique of modern society beyond indicting the Enlightenment's self-destructive nature and, eventually, in Adorno's *Negative Dialectic*, downgrading the dialectic itself to a secondary "negative" role.[12] Inevitably, the whole remains inaccessible, resulting first, in the realization of reason's limitations; second, in speculative attempts to apprehend this whole through particular mythological constructions; and, third, in generating particular traditions rooted in these mythologies, which eventually provide values and direction, thus constituting viable community bonds. In this context, reason is not monopolized by any particular culture, but in some way or other is deployed by all cultures[13] to articulate their particular traditions

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11. For an excellent account of recent philosophical discussions concerning these issues, see John Tate, "The Hermeneutic Circle vs. the Enlightenment," in *Telos* 110 (Winter 1998), pp. 9-38. All the various attempts by Enlightenment ideologues to construct alternative "substantive," "communicative," etc. versions of reason seek to sneak content into an otherwise very powerful instrumental construct which, precisely because of its contentlessness, can be readily presented as neutral to provide a *universally valid* cultural foundation displacing all other purportedly arbitrary *particularistic* versions based on traditions, religion and myth. As Adorno and Horkheimer came to realize in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, tr. by John Cumming (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), a culture pretending to be based exclusively on instrumental rationality itself reverts to the very same kind of ungrounded mythology it initially sought to dismiss. Thus Critical Theory, the epitome of Western rationalism, ends up articulating roughly the same devastating critique of modernity initially developed by Edmund Burke and the rest of the opponents of the French Revolution, including Tocqueville — a critique which became an inextricable part of that same conservative critique of liberalism successfully appropriated (and at the same time discredited) by fascism and Nazism between the two world wars.

12. Theodore W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectic*, tr. by E. B. Ashton (New York: The Seabury Press, 1973). Thus, e.g., Sherratt's efforts to provide "positive" readings of *Negative Dialectic*, by reducing the book to a mere epistemological treatise, fail to acknowledge that, for Adorno, under present conditions, mimesis cannot lead to reconciliation with nature since reality is fractured and the whole is false. Consequently, whatever awareness may flow from the deployment of negative dialectic, it must remain not only negative, but it must make sure it is not reintegrated into the predominant system of domination. See Y. Sherratt, "Negative Dialectics: A Positive Interpretation," in *International Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 149 (March 1998), pp. 55-66.

13. See Emmanuel C. Eze, "Out of Africa: Communication Theory and Cultural Hegemony," in *Telos* 111 (Spring 1998), pp. 139-162.

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and regulate community life. While it realized the importance of mythological foundations, and, therefore, of the theological constructs that systematized them into cultural frameworks, the Frankfurt School was too close to the traumatizing experience of Nazism (the most cynical attempt to recycle mythological traditions in the 20th century) to be able to emphasize the ineradicability of this dimension of culture,[14] analyze the devastating consequences of their occlusion, defend what remained of it, and translate this analysis into the kind of traditionalist critique of modernity without which Critical Theory remains inextricably tied to the mundanity it seeks to transcend.[15]

Sociology, the science of modernist immediacy at the service of the administrative apparatus of post-Enlightenment society, can only deal with the facticity of the given and, therefore, often ends up in conformism and nihilism. It tends to be conformist because, notwithstanding its ideological rationalist pretenses, it cannot dismiss anything as "irrational" without smuggling in those very values that have been methodologically excluded. As a consequence of its purported commitment to neutrality, it must accept as legitimate whatever values it finds objectified in social reality at the time. It tends to be nihilist, because it cannot itself provide any values, having to

14. Keenly aware that the first generation of the Frankfurt School theorists had difficulty grounding their critique, Jürgen Habermas argues that, almost by default, they reverted to the kind of "philosophy of consciousness" inextricably bound with that Enlightenment whose shortcomings they simultaneously indicted. See Jürgen Habermas, "From Lukács to Adorno: Rationalization as Reification," in *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1, tr. by Thomas McCarthy (Boston; Beacon Press, 1984), pp. 339-344. Habermas tries to provide an alternative but, unlike his predecessors, he goes in the opposite direction. Instead of extending the critique, he tries to salvage and complete the project of modernity by deploying language and communication as the foundations of intersubjectivity. Such a clever maneuver to salvage tradition and culture automatically, while remaining within the context of universalism and modernity, fails in that language, although universally accessible, is neither universal nor neutral. In fact, it can ground intersubjectivity precisely to the extent that it is saturated with myriads of traditional and cultural sedimentations. This is all the more obvious with, e.g., Asian languages and dialects, which explicitly embody not only particular traditions and cultures, but also specific behavioral norms. Far from legitimating modernity, on closer examination the linguistic foundation undermines it by reintroducing that extraneous traditional dimension modernity claims to be able to do without. At any rate, even if it were successful in providing a neutral and universally valid intersubjective foundation, as Wolin has shown, the Habermasian solution remains hopelessly abstract and unable to translate into anything other than a celebration of eloquent, but powerless intellectuals tooting their own horns. See Richard Wolin, "Critical Theory and the Dialectic of Rationalism," in *New German Critique* 41 (Spring-Summer 1987), pp. 23-52.

15. For a masterful effort in this direction, even if too close to a particular tradition, see Catherine J. Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).

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acknowledge all existing ones neutrally, as mere data.[16] Thus, in order not to compromise "value-neutrality," whatever happens to be the case at any given time must be automatically accepted — even genocide and concentration camps. Atrocious as they were, Nazi biology and sociology did attempt to establish "facts" in ways which, no matter how methodologically sloppy or repulsive to most people, were nonetheless objectively falsifiable and thus, at least according to Karl Popper and his still influential school of scientific certification, scientifically legitimate, even if ultimately dead wrong. This is not unusual: most of science consists of false claims whose scientific legitimacy is purely methodological, depending entirely on their susceptibility to falsification, which helps explain why the history of science is largely a cemetery of false hypotheses.

What, until recently, has been routinely dismissed as standard reactionary carping,[17] but is now being increasingly acknowledged even by its liberal and progressive advocates, i.e., that modernity is terminally nihilistic, is what threatens a "totalitarian" outcome in the sense of contributing to the development of manipulative regimes. Here, the usage of discredited concepts such as "totalitarianism" in a weakened, metaphorical sense is not altogether unwarranted. Although inadequate as a rigorous theoretical tool, "totalitarianism" may still be marginally useful as a loose construct to describe a mere tendency within modern society. Simply put,

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16. This was the thrust of Adorno's criticism of sociology in the famous "Positivismusstreit" in 1961, despite the fact that it had practically nothing to do with its intended target, Karl Popper, whose overly formalist approach can certify as scientifically valid only very little of what nowadays passes for sociology. In fact, their mutual hostility notwithstanding, both Popper and Adorno share a distrust of most of sociology's scientistic pretenses. See Theodor W. Adorno *et al.*, eds., *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*, tr. by Glyn Adey and David Frisby (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).

17. The usual dismissal of these views as "reactionary" is predicated on the dogmatic assumption of an otherwise indefensible and long discredited theory of "progress," whereby modernity inevitably succeeds pre-modernity, is qualitatively "better," and any critique emphasizing and seeking to recover what may have been lost as a result of modernity's supposed successful displacement of pre-modernity is the pathological nostalgic longing for a past long gone. During the past half century, because of unwarranted associations *tout court* with fascism and Nazism, critiques of modernity developed along these lines are often automatically branded "totalitarian" and cast out of "legitimate" political and theoretical discussions without any substantive argument. After all, who in their right mind would want to find any redeemable features in any of these regimes and risk being terminally associated with them? For a spectacular case of "politically correct" liberal intolerance in France, see the special issue of *Telos* 98-99 (Winter 1993-Spring 1994) on "The French New Right: New Right — New Left — New Paradigm?" documenting how practically the entire French liberal establishment has systematically demonized any possible allusion — real or imagined — of similarities between some recent cultural criticism and fascist or Nazi ideology.

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totalitarianism, understood as what the term literally suggests, i.e., total control, is in principle impossible since, as long as human beings have a modicum of freedom (and without it they would no longer be human, but mere objects), they can always do something other than what they are told or coerced into doing. So, at best, "total control" is a wish which in practice, to the extent that its realization has to be necessarily mediated by an autonomous subjective decision to behave as expected, must remain unavoidably conditional. As "total control" rather than as a mere tendency, totalitarianism could not possibly describe any past or present real society. This is why it is always defined idiosyncratically, and often opportunistically, every time there is any serious attempt to use it. Even during its darkest hours, Stalinism was extraordinarily paranoid, and on the look-out for all sorts of internal conspiracies by, e.g., CIA agents, "Jewish" doctors, unreconstructed reactionaries and even members of the Central Committee, precisely because it was all-too-aware of the impossibility of total control, and the constant threat of deviation. As for Nazism, the fact that the regime retained some form of capitalism and market mechanisms indicates the extent to which total control was never even on the agenda.

Totalitarianism, understood as various versions of authoritarianism constraining freedom, may help explain what can happen when modernity succeeds in obliterating all traditions upon which particular cultures are grounded. At that point, to the extent that socio-psychological and cultural reproduction no longer take place within a traditional aesthetic-mimetic (or *lebensweltliche*) dimension,[18] now effectively colonized (to use Habermas' terminology) by the state and the market, socialization is stunted, increasingly resulting in a society of morally incompetent sub-individuals. This means that whatever *Verfassungspatriotismus* modern societies (liberal democracies) may postulate, it is no longer automatically internalized by the increasingly clientized citizenry through the now obliterated traditional aesthetic-mimetic mechanisms of socialization. Rather, it is accepted only out of expediency, i.e., it is heeded only when

18. See Paul Piccone, "The End of Public Education?" in *Telos* 111 (Spring 1998), pp. 123-138. This was the original position of the Frankfurt School in the mid-1930s when, in the attempt to explain the rise of Nazism, in the collective project dealing with *Authorität und Familie*, it pointed to the disintegration of parental authority as one of the main reasons for the attraction of bureaucratic and dictatorial authority. Couched in psychoanalytic terms fashionable at the time within avant-garde German intellectual circles, the father figure can be read as a loose metaphor for the cultural traditions constituting personality and character which, at that time, were being eradicated by a modernity itself reduced to "capitalism" by the equally fashionable Marxist mindset.

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it is impossible to ignore without incurring substantial penalties.

The decline of the subjective internalization of social norms means that they must now be imposed and enforced by a growing number of external governmental agencies, resulting in a considerable expansion of the bureaucratic apparatus. The increase of restrictions on personal freedom that this process entails eventually brings about what may be characterized rhetorically as various degrees of "totalitarianism" or simply as increasing oppression. This happens when these restrictions become excessive — a social deterioration which develops *pari passu* with the generalization of modernity and the concomitant obliteration of traditions binding particular communities. Thus, far from constituting mere residual aberrations in the process of being scientifically managed out of existence by the growing number of appropriate professional state agencies (as modernist ideology claims), contemporary social pathologies, such as community disintegration, widespread substance abuse, high crime rates, family instability, personality dysfunctions, etc., actually turn out to be unavoidable epiphenomena of late modernity, i.e., a mode of social organization that has succeeded in eroding traditional infrastructures to the point that it now finds it increasingly difficult to socialize a number of individuals large enough to sustain democratic institutions. The resulting managerial state necessary to assist these sub-individuals in navigating their way through everyday life can only function by increasingly issuing guidelines, regulations and restrictions. This displacement of responsibility from individuals to government agencies tends to render these individuals increasingly dependent on, and addicted to, the professional "big brothers," resulting in ever greater deteriorations of the conditions necessary to sustain a democratic society. Here, "totalitarianism" can be deduced by projecting this process *ad absurdum*, to the point where there is hardly any space left for personal choices.

Contrary to readings of Marcuse's account of "one-dimensionality" as more than a mere tendency of advanced industrial societies attempting to "complete the project of modernity" by means of a "politically correct" rationalization of its citizenry, such an outcome is impossible in principle because, long before it can be institutionalized successfully, it leads to systemic crises and, eventually, to social break-down. This is true of all accounts of "totalitarianism," both as the outcome and the rejection of modernity. It has to do with the paradox whereby a "modern" system, presumably free of all traditional encrustations, can thrive only by parasitically relying for its reproduction — the successful socialization of new

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generations and the constitution of autonomous individuality — precisely on those traditional sedimentations it progressively undermines as irrational and, in extreme cases, as obstacles to progress and as the ultimate causes of social problems: parental authority, religious upbringing, etc.

If socialization requires those irreplaceable, informal, traditional infrastructures that constitute the aesthetic-mimetic dimension, and these infrastructures are progressively eroded by modernity, then the latter can thrive only in the early phases of its institutionalization, before the erosion is complete or very severe. This process can last a long time in the West or in other societies where traditions have been particularly strong and often constitutionally protected, while the rationalizing agents, at least at the beginning, have been rather weak. As the Soviet experience of a very powerful party-state accelerating the modernization of a fragmented and terrorized society has shown, however, the eventual impact is devastating. To the extent that the reconstitution and reinstitutionalization of traditions takes a long time, after the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union the mere introduction of the market, democracy, civil liberties, constitutionalism and all the trappings modernist ideology considers essential has failed to integrate Russian society into the "free world" as quickly and as easily as originally projected by Cold War liberals.

Modernity: Culture or Pathology?

Fortunately, in societies with long-standing traditions of civil liberties, particularly free speech, growing social disintegration eventually generates a weariness with "modernity" and social rationalization, resulting in their rectification — even if not by "official" academic intellectuals constituting an integral part of the ruling bureaucratic apparatus and having a stake in the constant growth of the managerial state. A "soft" state of emergency triggered by the threat of an external enemy (as during the Cold War)[19] can temporarily postpone inquiries into the predominant

19. This may help explain the growing obsession with demonizing Islam as a replacement for communism. Presumably, at least in the near future, a new enemy would extend the soft state of emergency and shield the system from troublesome inquiries into the legitimacy of its new relations of domination. Following Samuel P. Huntington's much discussed *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1996), a growing number of books have been warning about the Islamic threat. See, e.g., Fereydoun Hoveyda, *The Broken Crescent, the "Threat" of Militant Islamic Fundamentalism* (New York: Paeger, 1998). This does not mean that religious fanaticism is not a serious problem, especially when it resorts to terrorism. The point is that it also happens to perform a convenient legitimating role.

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system's legitimacy by deflecting attention from or de-emphasizing internal problems, but not in any way resolving them. Thus, far from constituting its epitome, *modernity is a particular pathology of Western culture*. Despite the various spectacular scientific, technological and other successes modernist apologists have successfully, but unwarrantedly, managed to associate with it,[20] modernity tends to generate constant systemic crises threatening its stability, while simultaneously triggering often violent traditionalist reactions, both internally and externally (e.g., Oklahoma City and international anti-American terrorism). This does not translate into a call for a return to some mythical "pre-modernity," understood as an inferior and temporally prior stage of development — itself a modernist construction referring to pre-industrial societies lacking technology, science, communication networks and intense intercultural interaction. Rather, it prefigures not only a more humble Western culture, no longer pretending to be universally valid (and thus more respectful of other seemingly incompatible cultures), but also more self-conscious of its own traditional roots and values — precisely what Enlightenment ideology sought to ridicule, delegitimate, and then systematically occlude.

Such a rediscovery of traditional roots is the precondition for a general cultural repoliticization. It would entail the reintroduction of particular

20. The scientific, technological and industrial successes often associated with modernity — even the development of the market — have nothing to do with its ideological elaboration as a self-grounding rationalism requiring no extraneous traditional props. These successes end up causally associated with modernity only by technological determinists or unreconstructed orthodox Marxists still clinging to the model of base and superstructure. As the Japanese or the Singaporean examples show, all of these things are not incompatible with traditional cultures, and are not tied to any particular ideology, such as Protestantism or Confucianism, as Japanese scholars like Michio Morishima have claimed in recycling Max Weber's questionable thesis to explain Japan's success. See his *Why has Japan "Succeeded"? Western Technology and the Japanese Ethos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). For a critique of the reading of Japan's success along Weberian lines, which, however, unwarrantedly assumes modernity to be a particular culture, see Luciano Pellicani, "Notes on the Japanese 'Success Story'," in his *The Genesis of Capitalism and the Origins of Modernity*, tr. by James G. Colbert (New York: Telos Press, 1994), pp. 221ff. At any rate, the material successes often associated with modernity as a New Class ideology cannot be seen either as its cause or its consequence, and most 20th century philosophers, from John Dewey to Benedetto Croce, have regarded modern science, technology, industrialization, new modes of communication, etc. as mere means which, as such, are ultimately compatible with a variety of cultures and traditions that use them. See, e.g., John Dewey's *The Public and its Problems* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1954), pp. 158ff. Husserl, of course, could write about the crisis of European sciences only to the extent that he idiosyncratically regarded science as a culture rather than merely a series of instrumental constructs. If, however, his concept of science is understood as Western culture in general, his analysis turns into a devastating critique of modernity.

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forms of life rooted in local traditions, able to reconstitute personal identity and, *ipso facto*, autonomous individuality, within organic communities federated into larger political units not by arbitrary pseudo-universal norms, but by particular contractual arrangements. This reconfiguration of modernity cannot be reduced, as modernist critics invariably argue,[21] to a regression to the Hobbesian *bellum omnium contra omnes* that Enlightenment cosmopolitanism has been trying to checkmate domestically, by means of the modern state, and internationally, especially after WWI, by various forms of one-world governments. Rather, it would amount to a regrounding of values, and thereby the reconstitution of the various local cultural identities that modernity tends to homogenize out of existence. Thus, against a self-contradictory multiculturalism concealing the ever more powerful role of the allegedly neutral, modern central state, the critique of modernity must vindicate that "particularity and otherness" (traditions) and that "mimesis with nature" (the liturgical dimension) Adorno sought unsuccessfully to articulate during the last year of his life, especially in the unfinished *Aesthetic Theory*.

Having decided to break off their analysis of the dynamics of advanced industrial societies in the early 1940s, presumably for very good tactical reasons,[22] Marcuse and Adorno tried to pick up where they had left off during the changing climate of the 1960s. Unable to distance themselves entirely from the horrors of WWII and to re-examine the trajectory of modernity from an altogether non-modernist perspective, they still could not imagine any qualitative break in the predominant state of affairs. Thus, they only came up with fragmentary aesthetic or biologistic critiques: Marcuse proposing the instincts and "outsiders" as the last bastion of resistance to a system seemingly able to subsume all criticisms and integrate all opposition, and Adorno resting his hopes on those few artistic or philosophical

21. For a critique of modernist distortions of the concept of "the political," see Andrew Norris, "Carl Schmitt on Friends, Enemies, and the Political," in this issue of *Telos*.

22. If Pellicani is right, and *Dialectic of Enlightenment* constituted a belated and unacknowledged rediscovery of the conservative critique of liberalism and modernity, then it is obvious why the book was never completed, was published only much later in Amsterdam, and then practically repressed by its authors. At a time in which liberal democratic societies were engaged in a world war against Nazi and fascist regimes which, although deeply embroiled in modernity or in attempts to modernize, presented themselves as deadly opponents to liberalism and the Enlightenment, it would have been the utmost folly for Jewish refugees in the US to openly articulate any kind of critique of their host country even minimally resembling that of an enemy engaged in the extermination of "the Jewish race." Only after Nazism seemed to be fading in history did the critique resurface in Critical Theory texts, often embroiled in the totalitarian rhetoric Pellicani finds so offensive.

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insights able to break with the predominant conformist *modus cogitandi*. Aware that, in such a context, any readily accessible critique would be used to strengthen and sustain the very system of domination they opposed, unlike Marcuse (who in his last years flirted with the possibility of translating his ideas into concrete politics[23]), Adorno and Horkheimer retreated into conceptual obscurity, thus contributing to Critical Theory degenerating, after their death, into another irrelevant academic sub-discipline.

Intellectually indefensible as it may appear, such a tactic was not only expedient, but also politically sound. Since, however, Horkheimer and Adorno did not manage to outgrow their phase of "theoretical hibernation," they never took their analyses to their logical conclusions.[24] Consequently,

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23. On the basis of unpublished manuscripts in the Frankfurt Marcuse archives, Kellner tries to argue against "the widespread opinion that the group [the Frankfurt School] was turning away from social practice and political action in the 1940s," *op. cit.*, p. 246. As evidence for this, he points to a never published manuscript on social change and a few scattered essays on fascism commissioned by the US government during the war. Aside from this underwhelming evidence, there is nothing to indicate that either Marcuse or any other member of the Institute at that time had the faintest idea concerning concrete political practice or clear-cut objectives, other than a Teutonic version of the same vague slogans wannabe *engagé* New Leftists have been spouting since 1968. When, toward the end of his life, Marcuse tried to wade into "concrete politics" in *Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), all he could come up with was warmed-over orthodox Marxist clap-trap about the rural proletariat in the Third World, or wishful thinking concerning how in Vietnam, Cuba and China "a revolution is being defended and driven forward with struggles to eschew the bureaucratic administration of socialism." See Murray Bookchin, "Beyond Neo-Marxism," in *Telos* 36 (Summer 1978), pp. 11ff. Almost two decades after his death, Marcusean *aficionados* have yet to acknowledge that, with *Eros and Civilization* and even earlier, Marcuse had entered a theoretical *cul-de-sac*, and insist on summarizing the "concrete" political legacy of this "apparently straight" man essentially as a footnote to Foucault's apotheosis of the gay liberation movement. See Paul Breines, "Revisiting Marcuse with Foucault: *An Essay on Liberation* meets *The History of Sexuality*," in Bokina and Lukes, *op. cit.*, p. 54. Thus, the original naturalistic turn to psychoanalysis finally reveals itself for what it really was: a politically irrelevant exercise in applied narcissism, whose real impact can be measured by the AIDS body-count. On the whole, what is good about the "new sensibility" is the covert recycling of the old Judeo-Christian charity, while what is new is a particularly self-destructive nihilistic narcissism.

24. See Theodor W. Adorno, "On Tradition," in *Telos* 94 (Winter 1992-93), pp. 75-82, where he fumbles hopelessly in the effort to make sense of a dimension he acknowledges as crucial, but one which constantly eludes his dialectical grasp. Thus, he sees that: "There is no tradition today and none can be conjured, yet when every tradition has been extinguished the march toward barbarism will begin" (p. 78). But he also sees current chances to redeem traditions as cultural foundations as doomed to succumb to the predominant logic of domination: "Whoever seeks to avoid betraying the bliss which tradition still promises in some of its images and the possibilities buried within its ruins must abandon that tradition which turns possibilities and meanings into lies. Only that which inexorably denies tradition may once again retrieve it" (p. 82).

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their defense of "particularity and otherness" or their call for "mimesis with nature" remained vacuous and open to all sorts of Freudian, multicultural or fashionable academic interpretations. But "mimesis with nature" cannot possible refer to, e.g., any gay retreat to polymorphous perversity, since "nature" is not reducible solely to the instinctual dimension. Rather, it refers to that all-pervasive precategorical totality Adorno constantly characterized as inevitably inaccessible to the concept — an inaccessibility which, historically, has always triggered theological speculations, the realization of human limitations and, most importantly, the constitutions of communities and cultures to cope with them. And what is that "particularity and otherness" in need of defense against the homogenizing logic of modernity, if not those particularistic cultures modernity summarily dismisses as irrational repositories of superstition and myth? This is why *Dialectic of Enlightenment* associated modernity with the Holocaust, understood as the most extreme form homogenization can take with regard to a particular culture that has resisted assimilation for millennia, under the most adverse conditions. Having dismissed all values as equally irrational, the supposedly self-sufficient rationalism of modernity is thus unencumbered by any ethical restraints, and can plan to exterminate whole cultures as easily as to organize production and distribution.

It is precisely this general scenario that Zygmunt Bauman has elaborated in what is one of the best books ever written about the Holocaust.[25] And this is also what modernist apologists like Pellicani cannot accept. Allegedly, such a conclusion is the result of the failure to recognize modernity as a particular "*culture* of rights and freedoms," and not just a *civilization*, presumably understood as the neutral unfolding of the productive forces. As a culture, modernity for Pellicani is grounded in *ratio* and other traits capable of sustaining a unique social configuration incompatible with any kind of totalitarianism and, *ipso facto*, incapable of generating anything like the Holocaust — a particularly extreme case of otherwise typical outcomes of societies embroiled in palingenetic projects predicated on various irrational *Weltanschauungen*. The characterization of modernity as a culture rather than a civilization seeks not only to

25. Bauman focuses primarily on paradigmatically modernist developments such as "the step-by-step dismantling of all non-political power resources and institutions of social self-management" — part of the homogenizing strategy to obliterate all particularity and otherness, while rationalizing heterogeneous social reality to conform to what Adorno indicted as the one-sided concept — as the main contributing causes for the planning and smooth bureaucratic implementation of the Holocaust. See Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), p. xiii.

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checkmate any possible interpretation of the current state of affairs as a transitional stage leading to some higher stage of development, free of all the current problems (the Marxist reading of the age of bourgeois rule), but also to transpose the alleged neutrality of the development of productive forces associated with civilization to modernity-as-a-culture in order to simultaneously legitimate it as universally valid.

This deployment of discredited sociological oppositions of "civilization" and "culture," and an idiosyncratic understanding of "modernity" confuse more than they clarify and, in this particular case, lead Pellicani into misreading not only the dynamics of modern society, but also much recent history — first and foremost, the tragic trajectory of the Soviet Union. Far from being merely the result of a misguided palingenetic project based on an arbitrary *Weltanschauung*, the Soviet experiment was primarily a revolutionary exercise in hyper-modernity. It was carried out by a ruthlessly modernizing New Class of revolutionary intellectuals, who managed to take power under exceptional circumstances and to institutionalize an all-powerful party-state to rationalize Soviet society along paradigmatically Enlightenment lines. In other words, contingencies such as a viable market economy or the institutionalization of rights are not as decisive for modernity as is hyper-rationalization through a central plan to achieve goals such as the development of the "New Man," deduced from a scientistic Enlightenment vision. Thus, the implications of this failed experiment for Western society are precisely the opposite of the ones Pellicani draws. The culprit is a particularly extreme form of modernity, rather than its rejection. Not only did the Bolsheviks deploy modern technology and science, seek to develop the means of production, and create the world's largest bureaucratic apparatus, but they also bought Enlightenment metaphysics lock, stock and barrel, along with its secularized Christian eschatology and a unilinear theory of history going from creation to redemption, redefined as communism: a paradise on earth, inhabited by free, self-fulfilled, social individuals.

When all the rhetorical dust settles, the real difference, or at least the most important one, between Pellicani's modernity and the Bolsheviks' version is the market, the individualism it presupposes and, by implication, the *ratio* Pellicani unjustifiedly identifies with it. But here, Pellicani, along with all Enlightenment rationalists, uses *ratio* not as merely instrumental rationality, but as a system endowed with normative clout. Thus, he betrays a hidden reliance on extraneous axiological elements he simultaneously claims to have discarded as irrational traditional residues. They

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reappear objectified within that given his modernity uncritically presupposes. If it is only the market and individualism that supposedly separates "totalitarian" from liberal democratic or modernist societies, this is too weak a separation, which immediately collapses when one realizes that many regimes Pellicani would undoubtedly brand "totalitarian," such as today's China have retained, and are entirely compatible with the market, private property and whatever individualism they engender (as was Nazi Germany). When all is said and done, because of a confused concept of rationality, Pellicani falls into the very same economistic determinism he elsewhere rejects in his critique of Friedrich von Hayek, and even then he is unable to provide any viable *principium differentiationis* allowing him to classify "totalitarian" regimes as non-modern or anti-modern.[26]

The continuity between the failed Bolshevik system and Western liberal democracies becomes even stronger if they are analyzed as variations of the same bureaucratic-centralist model run by a New Class of *apparatchiks* managing new and more pervasive (although considerably less oppressive) relations of domination than those obtaining within classical capitalism or feudalism. The lesson to be learned from the Soviet disaster is not that Western societies have finally managed to achieve the most perfect socio-political order in "this, the best of all possible worlds" but, rather, that, since they are embroiled in the same modernist logic, whose acceleration led to the socio-economic collapse of the Soviet Union, they

26. See Luciano Pellicani, "La Grande Società di Hayek: Un Esame Critico," in *Modernizzazione e Sviluppo*, Vol. 7, No.1-2 (1996), pp. 14-16. For a similar critique, see Alain de Benoist, "Hayek: A Critique," in *Telos* 110 (Winter 1998), pp. 71-104. Pellicani criticizes Hayek for reducing all political relations to merely economic ones by identifying society exclusively with the market, thus reducing "social justice" solely to the market's allocation of costs and benefits. In parting company with the libertarians, however, Pellicani ends up shooting himself in the foot. According to Pellicani, as an essential social ingredient guaranteed by civil rights, social justice presupposes extra-economic norms. He is well aware that "in a market economy the actors are free to stipulate contracts concerning sales and purchases, but always within the framework of extra-economic norms of an essentially ethical nature, posing inviolable limitations to those entering into contracts" (*Ibid.*, p. 16). But such limitations and other ethical restrictions cannot be derived simply from *ratio*. They can only come from those very traditions he otherwise dismisses, and regards as mere social residues rapidly heading for oblivion. It is unclear how, without them, his "civil society" would differ from an amorphous mass society of increasingly cretinized clients requiring the management of a New Class and, therefore, although much more benevolent and peaceful, in principle not different from the totalitarianism he indicts. Once again, the eradication of all those traditional handicaps, which allegedly prevent *homo oeconomicus* from behaving as a rational agent in the marketplace, undermine the conditions presumably necessary for a viable market and a society even minimally concerned with social justice.

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have managed to avoid or postpone comparable results, only because of the recalcitrance of particularly deep-rooted traditions and their stubborn resistance to modernity. Especially in the US, where the American Revolution, unlike its French counterpart shortly thereafter, was not primarily concerned with modernization but, rather, with political independence, traditions remained particularly strong, at least up to the War between the States and the beginning of the transformation of the federation into a nation. Contrary to standard Frankfurt School misreadings of the US as a country without traditions — a reading shared by most Europeans, who routinely confuse the US with its Hollywood caricature — the American heartland remains deeply rooted in traditions and concerned with the defense of personal freedoms, even if they occasionally take extreme pathological forms.[27] Despite all this, unless the modernist logic is reversed, both the US in particular and the West is general are headed in the disastrous direction taken by the Soviet Union, although the chances of social collapse or of equally brutal practices at this point in time are rather slim.

Culture, Civilization and Weltanschauung

Pellicani's analysis is further complicated by his attempt to recycle an old sociological distinction between *civilization* and *culture,* terminally discredited by its long association first, with nationalism and imperialism, and subsequently, after this distinction was translated into the economistic model of base and superstructure, with even more problematic and vulgar Marxist usages.[28] According to Norbert Elias, this distinction between civilization and culture came about as a result of the differing social conditions of the French and German intelligentsia during the 18th century, and reflected the different predicament of the middle classes in those two countries. Whereas, at that time, French intellectuals had direct influence

27. See Göran Dahl, "Localism vs. Nationalism in Midwestern Populism," in this issue of *Telos*. This helps explain why it has been so difficult to "rationalize" American society, despite constant efforts by a powerful and determined bureaucratic apparatus.

28. Here Pellicani is in good company. When it came to providing a short account of culture and civilization, even Adorno, Horkheimer and their students in the reconstituted Frankfurt Institute for Social Research could not resist the sirens of Marxism and ended up recycling the base/superstructure model. Their short a-historical and a-political essay on the subject flip-flops from Cicero to Dante to Ortega y Gasset, only to reach pedestrian technological-determinist conclusions: "the dream of civilized man," trapped in consumerism by the irrationality of capitalism, will achieve "that which culture has promised" only after civilization will have spread sufficiently so that there will be "no more hunger on earth." See The Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, "Culture and Civilization," in *Aspects of Sociology*, tr. by John Viertel (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), pp. 89-100.

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on the court, and thus on the centers of political power, their German counterparts were confined to universities and to the dissemination of their bourgeois aspirations via philosophy and literature. Thus, the Germans not only introduced the distinction, but tended to value culture above civilization, since allegedly it represented an uncorrupted expression of Enlightenment ideals, unsullied by reformist comprises with power and the superficiality of courtly life. For French intellectuals, civilization was identified with the refined manners and sensibilities of court life in opposition to the vulgarity of both peasants and non-European "savages." By the end of 18th century, after the French Revolution had swept away the nobility and institutionalized the ideals of the Enlightenment, it became a justification for French expansion and imperialism. Subsequently, European nations came to regard "the process of civilization completed within their own societies . . . as an expression of their own higher gifts." From then on, this "civilization" was used by "those nations which have become colonial conquerors, and therefore a kind of upper class to large sections of the non-European world, as justification of their rule."[29]

As Schmitt points out, until the end of the 19th century (after which it ceased to provide the basis for international legal institutions regulating colonial expansion and degenerated to a crude ideological façade), the main use of this distinction was to justify ethnocentric presumptions regarding the superiority of Western countries *vis-à-vis* the "primitives"

29. See Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994), pp.41, 3-9 and 5-41. Elias quotes Napoleon's address to his troops on the eve of the invasion of Egypt in 1798: "Soldiers, you are undertaking a conquest with incalculable consequences for *civilization*." He could do this since, from the very beginning, the distinction was part and parcel of Enlightenment ideology. As Eric Voegelin points out in *Science, Politics and Gnosticism* (Chicago: Gateway, 1968), pp. 90ff., from as far back as Condorcet, Enlightenment intellectuals have seen themselves entrusted with the task of spreading their true knowledge to accelerate progress and perfect man. Thus, from the very beginning, under the pretext of spreading civilization (or, in Pellicani's terms, modernity), Enlightenment ideology has been *the* revolutionary gnosis *par exellence*. Inherently intolerant of all other cultures, automatically dismissed as inferior and mired in superstition and dogma, in the early 19th century these intellectual pretenses readily translated into colonialist and imperialist projects, which have always been associated with the liberal and enlightened bourgeoisie. This is true of Germany as well. When it finally came time for Germany to catch up with France and Britain, and to launch imperialist expansion at the end of the 19th century, it was done as part of the liberals' broader project of modernization. As Stefan Breuer put it, in Germany "imperialist policies were advocated, not by the conservatives' extreme wing, but by the liberals, in their social and national variant, who saw in such a strategy the only possibility of taking charge of (forced) capitalist modernization and of gaining an otherwise threatened hegemonic role." See Stefan Breuer, *Anatomie der Konservativen Revolution* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995), p. 14.

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they had conquered or were in the process of conquering.[30] Thus, culture referred to the particular bodies of values, norms, beliefs, etc. that various societies develop in constituting themselves as distinct political entities, and civilization referred to the productive, technical and administrative apparatus. It was an academic version of the Marxist base/superstructure distinction, often understood independently of any economic determinism. From the beginning of the *conquista* to the Enlightenment, Western superiority was seen as a function of Christianity; from the 18th to the 20th century, Christianity was gradually displaced by Western civilization *qua* Enlightenment ideology. Thereafter, this superiority was located in the technical-material objectifications of a particular Western culture, now seen as neutral, universal and inevitable (modernity).

Pellicani uses these terms uncritically, in the standard way they were canonized by American sociology of the 1950s: civilization refers to "industrialization, rationalization and bureaucratization" (or, as he writes, "the unlimited development of the productive forces and of the scientific-technological manipulation of nature"); while culture is predicated on a clear set of institutionalized values firmly embodied in a collective *modus vivendi*.[31] Here, Pellicani's efforts to redefine and upgrade modernity from a mere civilization coming into conflict with traditions and customs retarding its unavoidable growth to the level of a culture betray the extent to which his particular *Weltanschauung* remains trapped in the Marxism of his youth. Along with all Marxists, he clearly favors the base, which he first rebaptizes as "civilization," then generalizes into "modernity," and eventually promotes to the level of "culture." However, this "culture" is peculiar, in

30. See Carl Schmitt, *Der Nomos der Erde im Völkerrecht des Jus Publicum Europaeum* (1950) second printing (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1974), pp. 199ff. More precisely, according to Schmitt, it was with the 1885 Congo Conference that the *jus publicum Europaeum* began to unravel, with the blurring of the distinction between the colonizing and the colonized lands — between progressive *civilizations* and primitive *cultures*. It was the beginning of modern imperialism, predicated less and less on direct land occupation and more and more on commercial relations. Thereafter international relations of domination became a function of economic globalization or, to use Pellicani's terminology, the spread of "modernity."

31. According to Robert K. Merton's typical definition: "Civilization is simply a body of practical and intellectual knowledge and a collection of technical means for controlling nature. Culture comprises configurations of values, of normative principles and ideals, which are historically unique." Cited in A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckholn, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (New York: Vintage, 1952), p. 23. Most American sociologists, however, were not as careful, and used the distinction in the reductivist vulgar Marxist sense, as in the interminable discussions of "cultural lags" of the 1930s and 1940s, where a superstructural culture was periodically chided for falling behind the independently developing technical-material base.

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that it manages to retain all of the characteristics of the old base (neutrality, naturality and universal validity), and turns out to be immensely superior to all others not so endowed — inferior versions in need of modernization. Even more peculiar is the fact that this culture happens to coincide with Western culture in general and American global interests in particular.

All the old imperialist conundrums resurface, legitimated by a sociological *Ideenkleid* much thicker and more impenetrable than anything provided earlier by Christianity or the kind of "superior" civilization ushered in by the French Revolution. The US, now identified not just with Western culture in general but, even more broadly, with a universally valid "modernity," can proceed unfazed to pursue its traditional *Realpolitik* under the pretext of imposing "democracy" and spreading "human rights" throughout the world — as it has been doing all along and even more vigorously since the end of the Cold War — whenever the Marines and the IMF are available and it happens to be politically feasible. Geopolitics also undergoes substantial modifications: there are no longer enemies in the traditional sense of opponents defending claims as valid as one's own, but only "foes" to be exterminated.[32] Worse yet, since no single country or group of countries can any longer oppose US/UN hegemony, all military conflicts are reduced to "wars of national liberation," fought by "freedom fighters" (from the viewpoint of the insurgents), or "police actions" against terrorists and the like (from the viewpoint of the ruling elites). Far from being an aberration, Vietnam becomes generalized as the standard model.[33] More generally, to the extent that the enemy now is criminalized and this foe has no legitimate standing, he has to be exterminated. Genocides are no longer isolated instances taking place under extraordinary circumstances, as in, e.g., Armenia or Nazi Germany, but have become the

32. For a full discussion of the implications of the shift from "*inimicus*" (enemy) to "*hostis*" (foe) as a result of the collapse of the system of international law based on the *jus publicum Europaeum* and of the institutionalization of "modernity," see G. L. Ulmen, "Return of the Foe," and George Schwab, "Enemy or Foe: A Conflict of Modern Politics," in *Telos* 72 (Spring 1987), pp. 187-193 and 194-201 respectively.

33. While these developments have become widespread only recently, Schmitt traces them back to the earliest imperialist attempts to universalize Enlightenment ideology. In fact, contrary to Left mythology, which identifies the partisans exclusively with the anti-fascist fighters in the resistance during the closing phases of WWII, originally they (or, as they are now called, "freedom fighters") came into being with the Spanish and Prussian anti-Napoleonic struggles of 1808-1813, in defense of their particular traditions and cultures against the abstract universalism of an Enlightenment imposed throughout Europe by Napoleon and French imperialism. See Carl Schmitt, *Theorie des Partisanen. Zwischenbemerkung zum Begriff des Politischen* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1970); and "The Legal World Revolution," in *Telos* 72 (Summer 1987), pp. 73-90.

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normal configuration of military confrontations. From Bosnia to Rwanda to Kosovo, the old post-WWII cry "never again!" turns into "always!"

Pellicani's characterization of "totalitarianism" as the result of palingenetic projects predicated on *any* values other than the pseudo-universal ones embodied in what he considers modernity is but a continuation, on the level of theory, of the same imperialist project. Any attempts to reverse the social disintegration resulting from the destructive impact of Enlightenment ideology in flattening out cultural particularities are demonized as tendentially totalitarian, and the "final solution" in Nazi Germany (as well as the annihilation of the Kulaks in the Soviet Union) are hypostatized to paradigmatic cases.

Since all social organizations presuppose some particular binding values, even if only the pseudo-universal ones of Enlightenment ideology, and "*omnis determinatio est negatio*," all societies, modern or otherwise, are necessarily "purificational" or palingenetic. Not surprisingly, on closer scrutiny, all Western regimes tend to fall within Pellicani's definition of "palingenetic societies," if only in some minimal sense. Thus, while nothing even close to the brutality and barbarity of the Holocaust or of the extermination of the Kulaks, the "Americanization" campaign to rapidly assimilate masses of new immigrants during the early part of this century through, e.g., Prohibition and other equally coercive measures;[34] or the more recent "political correctness," deployed to "sensitize" the US citizenry into "proper" behavior, are *in principle* (but only in very abstract terms) no different from the Soviet or Nazi palingenetic projects. As in the cases of Stalinism and Nazism, efforts to extirpate through legislation so-called "hate crimes," such as holding racist views and the disapproval of some sexual orientations or personal habits like smoking, peculiar practices, such as arranged marriages for girls in the early teens, or traditional family authority through arbitrary "child abuse" laws, etc., also seek to create a "New Man" or, in the politically-correct newspeak, "sensitive human beings," — or even to bring about the "new sensibility." Civil rights, in fact, become essential within modernist political formations precisely in

34. Even seemingly innocent policies, such as those dealing with the adoption of orphans, had hidden "purificational" objectives. As E. Wayne Carp shows in *Family Matters: Secrecy and Disclosure in the History of Adoption* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), since it was first enacted in Massachussetts in 1852, much adoption legislation in the 19th century was "an aggressive and covert form of Protestant proselytizing" meant to "Americanize" Catholic children of recent immigrants by providing them with a "proper" Protestant upbringing. Cf. also Jean Bathke Elshtain, "The Chosen Family," in *The New Republic* (September 14 and 28, 1998), pp. 46-54.

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order to contain the impact of this tendency. Historicaly, however, contrary to, e.g., the intentions of its anti-federalist advocates in the US, these rights have either strengthened the state as the agency entrusted with enforcing them, or else they have been applied very selectively, depending of the predominant configuration of political power.

At any rate, in terms of Pellicani's own presentation, the Enlightenment itself, with its ruthless "purification" of society of all religious remnants, traditions and other alleged "prejudices," as well as its awowed vocation to emancipate all, may well be considered the mother of all palingenetic *Weltanschauungen*. Pellicani dismisses all societies with particular goals as "gnostic," and those indulging in "revolutionary" gnosticism, as "totalitarian." Aside from historical accounts of early Christian herasies, however, the concepts of "gnosticism" and "revolutionary gnosticism" were first applied to modern socio-political phenomena by Eric Voegelin.[35] Contrary to Pellicani's identification of all anti-modernist regimes as "gnostic," Voegelin's detailed historical analyses yield rather different results. As Ted V. McAllister put it: "In Voegelin's copious works one finds numerous pages about 'modernity' and the conditions for its emergence. . . . To put the matter briefly, modernity is a gnostic revolt against reality. Voegelin chose the word 'gnostic' because it refers to claims about esoteric knowledge, knowledge that saves . . ."[36] Thus, a more careful historical reconstruction suggests that it may make more sense to see these "totalitarian" regimes as the next step in the peculiar pathological direction Western society has taken since the Enlightenment with modernity, in the process of attempting to complete the project of secularizing its Christian roots.[37] In recycling the libertarian illusion that the market as the universal organizational mechanism makes it possible for society to do away with all collective values, now privatized within the confines of particular individual projects, and in hypostatizing such a modernist remake of the old, discredited "bourgeois" vision to the level of a universal culture, Pellicani has managed to outdo both Francis Fukuyama and Dr. Pangloss.

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35. See Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952); and his *Science, Politics and Gnosticism*, *op. cit.*

36. Ted V. McAllister, *Revolt Against Modernity: Leo Strauss, Eric Voegelin, and the Search for a Postliberal Order* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1996), p. 21.

37. As Voegelin puts it in *The New Science of Politics, op. cit.*, p. 163: "The immanentization of the Christian eschaton made it possible to endow society in its natural existence with a meaning which Christianity denied to it. And totalitarianism of our time must be understood as journey's end of the Gnostic search for civil society."

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Localism vs. Nationalism in Midwestern Populism

Göran Dahl

Today anti-government sentiments in the US are often depicted as new, pathological, right-extremist, etc. This is misleading. In fact, these sentiments are an inextricable part of American identity. There has always been a latent conflict between those who think the US should be a nation and those who regard it as a federation. The nationalist impulse co-exists along with a wish for strong, autonomous, local communities. Depending on historical circumstances, this conflict has taken different forms. Modern American history begins with the revolution of 1776. The nature of that revolution is crucial in this respect — especially in its differences with the French Revolution.[1] The rights of the new federation's free citizens rested on tradition: English common law, Christianity, freedom from tyranny and corruption, the right to be different. The rights of French citizens were based on reason, abstract ideas and Roman Law, as well as the ambition of a homogenized national community. This tension has existed in the US from the very beginning and has become more

1. Tocqueville captured these differences when he wrote: "The Americans have this great advantage, that they attained democracy without the sufferings of a democratic revolution and that they were born equal instead of becoming so." See Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (London: Collins, 1968), Vol. II, p. 656. Edmund Burke made similar observations: since the people of the "colonies" are descendants of Englishmen, they "are therefore not only devoted to Liberty, but to Liberty according to English ideas, and on English principles. Abstract Liberty, like other mere abstractions, is not to be found." See Edmund Burke, *Pre-Revolutionary Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). p. 222. Of course, this is part of a critique of the legacy of the French Revolution: Jacobin terror, the attempt to create something totally new from year zero and to exterminate old traditions. See John Schwarzmantel, *The Age of Ideology* (London: Macmillan, 1998).

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intense ever since. Several US presidents have been more "French" and liberal (and therefore nationalist) than others. On the one side, there are "the people," the tradition of direct democracy, and the need to check central power (the cornerstone of populism); on the other, there are judges seeking to codify the law, and the liberal, nationalist Presidents. This contradiction goes back to the American Constitution itself.

The 10th Amendment Movement

American politics cannot be understood independently of this constitutional contradiction. On the one hand, there is Article VI, which posits the primacy of the federation, i.e., that US laws are supreme; on the other, there is the 10th Amendment, which says: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the constitution, nor prohibited by it, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people." Article VI was probably drafted by the nationalists among the framers of the Constitution, while the 10th Amendment was meant to win over the anti-Federalists, who were strongly opposed to the centralization of power. The balance between the two has been a matter of power relations, socio-economic conditions, and political strategies.

This tension is also reflected in the conflict between two different interpretations of the Constitution. The "compact theory" considers secession to be legal and was first defended by Thomas Jefferson in the Kentucky Resolution (1798). The states are sovereign, while the federal government is their agent. The "nationalist theory" first appeared in 1833 and held that the states were never sovereign. Instead, it was the people who were sovereign, since they had convened the Continental Congress. The states were only administrative units of a general will.[2] If the first is true, then the people have authority over the federal government since they can decide to secede if they so wish. This is nothing exceptional. It is possible in some other federations, e.g., Canada, and it was possible , at least in theory, in the former USSR.[3]

Recently, as a response to the growth in federal power, "The 10th Amendment Movement" has come into being to vindicate local prerogatives and limit the power of the central government. This movement includes extremists as well as moderates. The former want to

2. Donald W. Livingston, "One Nation Divisible," in *Chronicles* (February 1998), p. 14.

3. See Veljko Vujacic and Victor Zaslavsky, "The Causes of Disintegration in the USSR and Yugoslavia," in *Telos* 88 (Summer 1991), pp. 120-140; and Paul Piccone, "Secession and Reform in Canada," in *Telos* 106 (Winter 1996), pp. 15-63.

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reduce drastically all federal authority. Their best known spokesman is probably Charles Duke, a Colorado State Senator and the sponsor of the "10th Amendment Resolution," which puts state rights before the rights of the federal government.[4] In one form or other, this resolution has been passed in 15 states. The moderates merely want to stop the expansion of federal authority. Despite the fact that the US media, the government and the establishment often present this as a recent development having to do with the fantasies of a few lunatics, in some form or other this has been going on at least since the end of the 18th century, with many Republicans as well as Federalists insisting on the legitimacy of "nullification," i.e., the states' right to suspend or weaken federal laws.[5]

Of course, in American history, the best example of the clash between tradition — the longing for freedom from what is considered tyranny — and the nationalist impulse is the Civil War. What the South wanted was freedom from the Union, in the same way Americans once had freed themselves from the British Empire.[6] Thus it was not primarily a question of slavery, since the latter was embedded in the US Constitution. When Abraham Lincoln condemned slavery in the South, it was still legal in Washinghton D.C., Maryland, Missouri, West Virginia and other states. The Emancipation Proclamation of Jan 1, 1863 outlawed slavery only in the rebellious states. The Civil War had to do primarily with Northern economic interests, preserving the nation, and securing access to raw materials in the South, rather than freeing the slaves, even if it ultimately led to this result. Abolishing slavery was initially an epiphenomenon, which only subsequently was read back as the main cause: "The war had not been about slavery when it began. But, by its end, Abraham Lincoln had declared it to be so. And so it was."[7] Since it was against borders, unfettered capitalism triumphed over localism. Liberalism is also against borders, although it presupposes territorial boundaries within which it can rule with the help of the state's monopoly of violence. Thus the Civil War was a triumph for liberalism

4. In a July 30, 1994 speech, Duke asked "why do not members of the Congress understand what the (10th) Amendment is about?" He has also boasted that "citizens are prepared to fight United Nations troops on Colorado soil," and he believes that microchips are being implanted in babies. See Kenneth S. Stern, *A Force Upon the Plain* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 216.

5. The most famous case is probably South Carolina's nullification of a federal tariff law, which was a deadly threat to the state's economy. See Alan Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), pp. 171, 241.

6. Patrick J. Buchanan, "Mr. Lincoln's War," in *Chronicles* (October 1997), p. 13.

7. *Ibid.* p. 21.

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and capitalism, and a defeat of localism.[8]

Yet American localism and populism are far from dead. The midwest is full of communities faithful to traditional American values — individualism, community, work, freedom etc. — and very bothered by the way the government has betrayed these virtues.[9] Since the overwhelming majority of American intellectuals depend on the federal government for jobs, research grants, and various other privileges, they tend to be nationalist, i.e., politically loyal to a strong central government. As a result, localism and populism today tend to be articulated by simple, theoretically unsophisticated people who often end up advocating a localism polluted with the most bizarre views — a predicament which only reinforces the establishment elites' dismissal of the whole thing as collective madness. While the following three empirical accounts indicate why the media and the establishment may be *prima facie* warranted in not taking this phenomenon very seriously and dismissing it as political lunacy, they nonetheless indicate the extent to which localist and populist sentiments are still very much alive and unlikely to disappear in the near future.[10] Rather, any serious re-evaluation of American traditions and identity may lead to their resurfacing as a significant political force, cleansed of the various extraneous idiosyncrases which presently infest it. While they are not typical instances of American populism, the following three accounts

8. The following three accounts were chosen for reasons of time and place and by pure chance. All three have a single geographical source: the little town of St. Marys in Kansas, the location of what is probably the most important Traditional Catholic College in the US. The members of "The Common Law School" are Traditional Catholics, and live in the same county; The "Washitaw Empire" gained attention only when a car with license plates from the "Washitaw Empire" was stopped by a police officer in St. Marys. As a possible historical irony, one of St. Marys residents, Richard Keyes III, became "the most wanted man in Kansas" and well-known nation-wide after a shoot-out in the Spring of 1997 in Texas, from which he fled. This was the end of a militant faction of "The Republic of Texas," which took hostages and demanded official US recognition. Keyes was caught a couple of months later in Texas.

9. One of the reasons for the growth of this anger is the economic predicament of many farmers. During the 1970s, when the US had a surplus of wheat and other grains, large quantities were exported, above all to the Soviet Union, and farmers prospered. Many of them assumed that the good times would last indefinitely and took out large loans for extra equipment to increase production. Then came the 1980s and the crop market declined. Many farmers could not repay these loans and had to sell their farms. See Joel Dyer, *Harvest of Rage: Why Oklahoma City is only the Beginning* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997).

10. It is in this context that the controversial thinker Carl Schmitt remains relevant. For a current discussion of Schmitt, the partisan and the localist, see Paul Piccone, "Postmodern Populism," in *Telos* 103 (Spring 1995), pp. 45-86.

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are interesting in that they document how traditions linger within the American hinterland.[11]

1. The "Common Law" School in X County

Following an unexpected downturn in the price of farm products, a few years ago some midwestern activists organized themselves as the *Posse Commutatis* (literally meaning "Power to the County").[12] This minuscle small radical movement peaked in the 1980s. It was predicated on the idea that the only legitimate authority in the county was the county sheriff, empowered in emergencies to convene a posse consisting of all men between 18 and 45 years of age. According to the *Posse Commutatis*, all power above the county level is illegal. Its members refuse to pay taxes and regard the common law practiced in their own county courts as the only legitimate "Law of the Land." Some of the members were violent, and in North Dakota one of them, Gordon Kahl, became a martyr for the cause when he was gunned down in 1983 after having shot one county sheriff.

The appearance of the *Posse Commutatis* marked the return of a particular form of populism, defending the people's traditional values against the government and the banks. It led to the growth of one traditional element in populist culture: localism. The practice of solving problems at a local level, of helping neighbors and community, have been much stronger in the US than anywhere else. When laws and regulations grow, problem-solving moves away from the local setting and the ability to solve one's personal problems decreases. When government and financial institutions grow in power, the people retreat to their traditions and radicalize them or, rather, these traditions become depicted as "radical" and "extreme" by the media.[13]

In April 1997, midwest newspapers were full of reports about

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11. See Paul Gottfried's discussion of liberal democracy as "bureaucratic centralism" in his "Public Administration and Liberal Democracy," in *Telos* 104 (Summer 1995), pp. 27-50, where in a somewhat one-dimensional way he shows indirectly why memory of the past, especially of local and national movements, is of the utmost importance when dealing with the antinomies of liberalism.

12. Henry Campbell Black, *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul: West Publishing Co., 1991) p. 806.

13. For the concept of "radical localism," see Michael Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994). Barkun, however, defines it as the product of "hostility toward the policies of the federal government, the inability to mobilize a mass following, and a highly romanticized vision of the past" (p. 217f.). He sees it as a movement within the "racist Right," while in fact it is something much wider, including groups which are neither "racist" nor "Right."

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"Freemen Resurfacing in Kansas."[14] The story was that "Freemen," i.e., those who claim independence from government jurisdiction and operate under their own legal system ("common-law courts"), are growing.[15] Their main objective was to exempt themselves from taxes and regulations. The subtext of the media's accounts was obvious: some armed right-wing extremists were at it again. On closer examination, however, the official image turns out to be rather different from reality.

The best information concerning the group can probably be obtained from the sheriff and other people in his office. The members are trusted by the local people — a sheriff does not normally report to the FBI — and they are familiar with the law. It is easy to contact such informants and obtain the phone number of a famous "Freeman" in northeastern Kansas. His name is Ed (a pseudonym) — a pleasant 83 year old farmer and ex-teacher who holds classes on Common Law in his garage. Meeting him and his "pupils" provided a good insight into radical localism and its main concerns: common law, the Constitution, bank debts and "natural money." The group is made up of middle-aged, middle-educated, rural people. They are angry, their economic predicament is shaky, and they do not trust the government, the banks and federal authorities. They are outraged about Ruby Ridge and Waco, and some of them even think that Timothy McVeigh is innocent, that the Oklahoma City bombing was either a federal conspiracy or a deed of Middle-East terrorists.

"Common law" is perhaps the central theme of radical American localism. This "common law" is the opposite of statutory (or written) law and is supposed to be based on common sense and personal conscience. A common law court consists of a judge and a jury. They both decide what is right in every specific case by considering all relevant matters. They base their judgment on their own common sense and earlier cases. It is old English law dating back to the time of the Norman invasion. It is also the basis of American law. The only Civil Code in the US, in

14. See Judy L. Thomas' cover story in the *Kansas City Star* (April 27, 1997), and the shorter version of this story released by the Associated Press the following day.

15. One common activity is the writing of bad checks and other particular acts of defiance such as ordering the arrest of the governor of Kansas for taking his oath of office improperly. In fact, the "Christian Court," as they call themselves, in Abilene, Kansas, was probably right. Governor Bill Graves swore his oath orally, but the written and signed oath could not be found in the archives when the Freemen requested to see it. However, a couple of days later, it was there, dated half a year earlier! This information was provided by someone who, for obvious reasons, wishes to remain anonymous.

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California, in Section 22.2 states that the "common law of England, so far as it is not repugnant to or inconsistent with the Constitution of the United States, or the Constitution or laws of this State, is the rule of decision in all the courts of this State."[16] The practice of common law does not require formal education or extensive knowledge of written laws. It only requires a basic sense of what is right and wrong and an acquaintance with legal precedents, i.e., tradition. Its practice always runs the risk of being too rigid and, historically, equity law was created to supplement it. This equity law is based on compelled performance, i.e., people can be compelled to do more than just paying for damages.[17]

The common law system still predominant in the US was imported from England, although there are some important differences between the English and the American versions. In the US, common law has been more local.[18] It follows the doctrine of *stare decisis* (let decisions stand), i.e., that courts should follow precedents. Instead, the increasingly widespread civil law (or positive law) associated with the French Revolution and the rationalist tradition, is concerned with the legislative code.[19] This development has meant that more and more statutes are written down, since law today is often an instrument of government policy or the result of social pressures. The Freemen oppose this and plead for a return to the local way of practicing law, often basing it on the Bible.[20] In what could be called radical localist ideology, common law is opposed to the idea of "the Common Good." It is about liberty rather than morality, except for the primacy of the Ten Commandments.[21]

According to the Freemen's interpretion of common law, one has the absolute right to do anything, as long as it does not infringe on someone

16. Black, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

17. Thus, e.g., a seller backs out of a transaction. The buyer may sue for damages under common law principles, but if he wants a court to force the seller to sell (i.e., compel performance) he can appeal to the principles developed in equity. See Frederick G. Kempin, *Historical Introduction to Anglo-American Law* (St. Paul: West Publishing Company, 1990), p.19.

18. Thus, "homespun local justice was preferred, as was the common sense of the local jury, and some of the colonies for a time tried to base their law on the bible." See *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1979) Vol. 4, p. 1003.

19. Kempin, *op. cit.*, p. 14f.

20. As Ed writes in a "letter to the editor" (undated): "(common law) trials were fair and just. We were dealing with our neighbors who were close to the action, and we respected their judgement. The trial took place close to where the alleged incident occured."

21. Alan Brudner, *The Unity of Common Law* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1995), p. 2 ff.

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else's life, liberty or property.[22] If there is a "damaged party," i.e., a violation of another person's life, liberty or property, a court has to be set up, including a judge, a jury and the damaged party. The territorial base for community is the state or the people. The US Constitution (10th Amendment) guarantees this. But during US history, new amendments have been added to the original ones. If the new ones contradict the original ones, or are in conflict with God's will, one has to obey only the original ones, and the territory of the state can then be said to be "occupied" by federal authorities and the federal government.[23] Common law defenders believe in all sorts of conspiracies. One version goes as follows:[24] Congress, which in one way or another is controlled by the "world bankers," has transformed the US from a republic into a democracy. In the latter, one only has one vote (in elections), while in the former one can also vote in grand juries. In a republic, one is sovereign and can decide whether someone is or is not guilty. One participates in the law, rather than just obeying it. In a democracy, statute law rules and citizens become mere subjects. The subtext is that this is part of the commercialization of society, where the people give up their original power. These views are clearly part of an anti-New-Class ideology.

The Freemen believe that common law is all that is needed.[25] Radical localists argue that jurors only need common sense and tradition. The jury determines not only the facts but also the law, since the people are always sovereign. According to the "Citizens Rule Book," "America

22. Thus, one also has the right to make a fool of oneself. See Elijah Bishop, "Common Law and Law of the Land," in *Republic of Texas Magazine*, No. 12 (1997), pp. 20-21.

23. One good example is the 2nd Amendment (the right to bear arms), which has been "damaged" partly by the 1993 Brady gun-control bill requiring one to wait five days before buying a gun while local law-enforcement agents check one's background. Common law followers believe that this is part of a global conspiracy by the agents of "One World Government," including (mostly) Jewish bankers, the Interpol, the UN, etc. Here, the movie "The 5th Element" is to the point. In the movie, in 2214, the US has a "multicultural government," including a black president. The bad guys are pig-looking warriors and they speak in a southern accent. One interpretation would be that these pigs represent the dark, anti-liberal and irrational forces of so-called right-extremism.

24. The text is in an anonymous flyer provided by Ed.

25. Should there be speed limits? The Freemen say "No," as long as there is no harm to anyone. To the objection that by driving too fast one puts at risk other people, X replied that if there is no harm to anyone else, it is not a problem and that, at any rate, "risk" is an "abstract" construct. This, e.g., is the case in Montana, where one can be as intoxicated as one wishes when driving, as long as there is no harm to anyone else. This does not imply that driving too fast is not a real threat to pedestrians. X rejected this argument: everything that compels performance and links it to a punishment is not law but a commercial agreement. It is tradition vs. contract. See Bishop, *op. cit.*, p. 21

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began to function like a democracy instead of a republic."[26] Americans have forgotten that they they have votes other than the ones they cast in elections, because judges neglect to tell jurors about their right to trust their own judgment and declare defendants not guilty. This is serious, since juries have a role in protecting against political oppression.[27] This book's objective is to inform people that the US Constitution, rather than legislative statutes, is the "Law of the Land."

For Ed, his pupils and other radical localists, common law is not an end in itself. Rather, it is a means to use prevailing structures to promote certain ends: cancelling debts and fighting immoral practices such as divorce and abortion. Thus it has both an economic and a religious dimension. Ed and his men are anti-capitalists in that they hate Big Business and Finance Capital. In one of their favorite pamphlets, written by Sheldon Emry, bankers are depicted as fat, with curly hair and big noses, betraying a turn-of-the-century imagery. The message is clear: bankers are Jews.[28] When Ed and his men discuss bankers, they often whisper "yiddish, yiddish." This anti-Semitic conspiracy theory goes back to Henry Ford in the 1920s, when he developed it in his newspaper *The Independent* and, later, to Father Charles Coughlin, who popularized it in the 1930s through his radio program.[29] This anti-Semitism has several roots: religious — Jews murdered the Lord; anti-capitalist — Jews are over-represented in Finance Capital; and psychological — the need for a scapegoat. The tradition of anti-Semitism goes along well with radical localism as a reaction against the cultural hegemony of big cities. Emry's account goes as follows:[30] there is "debt-money" and "natural money." Americans are often poor and debt-ridden, despite the fact the US is the richest country in the world. Up to the beginning of this century, this was

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26. This is a popular radical localist document. It is a booklet containing the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and a "Handbook for Jurors" issued by various anti-government groups. It is on the Internet (http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/7006/rulebook.html).

27. Juries are not bound by the instructions provided by legal experts, i.e., the judges, and have often been accused of favoritism toward plaintiffs suing corporate defendants. See Kempin, *op. cit.* p. 53.

28. See Sheldon Emry, *Billions for Bankers: Debts for the People* (Phoenix, AZ: America's Promise Radio/Lord's Covenant Church, 1979). In the movie on Gordon Kahl, "In the Line of Duty," this booklet appears when a sheriff opens his suitcase.

29. Ed strongly recommends Coughlin's works. On Coughlin, see Kenneth S. Stern, *A Force upon the Plain* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 45f.

30. The same story is told by Gertrude Coogan, *Lawful Money Explained* (Hawthorne: Omni Publications, 1935) and by Christopher Weber . . . *Good as Gold?* (Berryville: The George Edward Durell Foundation, 1988).

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not a problem, since there was "real," "natural" money, i.e., gold and silver. Influential world bankers were opposed to this, since the only way they could make profits, through interest, was limited in an economy of self-sufficient people. Thus these bankers created depressions, in 1913 and 1938, by witholding funds needed for investments. As a response, the Federal Reserve Act was passed by Congress in December 1913 — "with many members away for the Christmas holidays."[31] This led to the creation of "The Federal Reserve System." This "private" bank[32] now had the exclusive right to issue money in the form of bank notes — "Federal Reserve Notes" — and this right was taken away from Congress.[33] Thus private bankers print money, people borrow it and pay interest. In 1932, there was a new depression, and when the bankers strengthened their influence over the economy, it was all over.

This simple explanation of poverty points to a simple solution: a return to "natural money." "Uncle Sam" should regain control over the issuing of money, spending it and loaning it interest-free. The result would be a debt-free America. Since this could not possibly work in a modern, global economy, according to radical localists, the economy would have to be nationalized and planned — a solution not too different from the one suggested by the Left. For this group of radical localists, theology, law and politics combine into a rather coherent ideology. Traditional Catholicism, poverty and actual conditions (including the mistakes of federal and state governments) result in a radical anti-capitalist, anti-Semite and anti-government position. Since this group is Traditional Catholic, it may seem misleading to label them "populists." Historically, American populism has always been overwhelmingly Protestant. Traditional Catholic emphases on order and on the Church's absolute authority do not fit well with populism's localist and libertarian impulses, and may help explain their rather paranoid version of populism. To that extent, even though they articulate authentic populist and localist ideas, Ed and his followers are not typical populists. Unaware of the contradiction between their religion and their political views, sooner or later they will have to face this dilemma. At any rate, they document the spread of populist ideas to new groups in American society.

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31. Emry, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

32. This is not entirely true. Private banks are members of the system, but the seven members of the Federal Reserve Board of Governors are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Congress. They set the requirements for member banks etc.

33. See Article 1, section 8, paragraph 5 of the U.S. Constitution.

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Common law activists often deploy the following strategies. A) While still alive, a person can lose all civil rights and become "civically dead."[34] Thus people convicted of serious crimes can be declared civilly dead. They lose the right to vote, to sue and be sued.[35] B) A "quiet title" is a proceeding that can be used if an organization or authority claims something whose ownership is challenged. If someone challenges the ownership of this title, the organization or authority claiming ownership has to prove its claims.[36] This works if the organization or authority is too busy to establish its claims or at least delays the whole process. C) "The Buck Stops Here!" is a slogan frequently used by radical localists, meaning the local community makes the decisions. This is what it is all about: meeting justice under common law and ignoring commercial and civil laws. This is mentioned in one of the most interesting documents on how to use the high status that common law still has in the US to subvert other laws and regulations.[37] It reports how the author, Howard Freeman, managed to fight the IRS and other authorities by appealing to the Constitution, the legal system and unpublished sources.

Allegedly, one judge told Freeman that prior to 1938 all Supreme Court decisions dealt with common law, but afterward all decisions have been based on public policy.[38] What happened in 1938? The welfare state was institutionalized. Freeman also reports an alleged "secret meeting" between higher judges and top US attorneys, where it was claimed that: "America is a bankrupt nation — it is owned completely by its creditors. Creditors own Congress, the executive, the judiciary and all state governments. Take silent judicial notice of this fact, but never reveal it openly. Courts are operating in a admiralty jurisdiction — call it anything, but do not call it admiralty."[39]

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34. Black, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

35. Someone in Southern Kansas did in fact seek to be declared civilly dead so that he does not have to pay taxes or bank debts. The official document relating to this case can be found in the Sheriff's Office in Topeka, Kansas.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 867.

37. Howard Freeman, *The UCC Connection* (Lancaster, OH: Americans for Constitutional Government, 1991). This text is also available on the Internet under the following address: http://www.madness.org/conspire/beat_the_irs.txt.

38. Freeman cites a case where common law was replaced by equity law. A man was injured by a railroad car because of the railroad company's negligence. The court which handled the case used commercial law and exonerated the railroad company from responsibility since the injured man did not have any contract with the company. Commercial law is federal law and, in this court decision, state laws (which follow common law) were superseded by federal equity laws.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

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In admiralty law, the court has jurisdiction only when there is a valid international contract. According to Freeman, the national debt is the basis for such a contract.[40] This cannot be official, since the American people then would have no autonomy. Yet admiralty law has taken over jurisdiction from common law. In common law, there has to be an injured party. It cannot compel performance. Its message is simply that one should behave in a way that will not injure anyone. If a law compels performance, it is equity law. Contracts have to be heeded, otherwise it amounts to contempt of court. The point is that, according to common law, contracts are always voluntary. With the creation of the Uniform Commerce Code (UCC), however, common law has been put aside. According to this law, an "agreement" (instead of a contract) is enough and if someone benefits from it, it is presumed that he agrees to meet whatever obligations are associated with those benefits. In other words, the simple rules of common law can confuse the whole modern fiscal system. A modern capitalist system would implode under a legal system predicated on simplified common law.

By examining the whole UCC, Freeman discovers that a reservation can be made in every agreement under the UCC by using the phrase "without prejudice." If this is used in connection with the signature on a document, it means that: "I reserve my right not to be compelled to perform under any contract or commercial agreement that I did not enter knowingly, voluntarily and intentionally. And furthermore, I do not accept the liability of the compelled benefit of any revealed contract or commercial agreement."[41] Furthermore, the UCC (1-103.6) states that "The Code is complementary to common law, which remains in force, except where displaced by the code. A statute should be construed in harmony with common law, unless there is a clear legislative intent to abrogate common law." Thus radical localists believe that they do not have to pay taxes and debts, fees for license plates, driver's licenses, etc.,

40. Freeman dicusses the law (effective in most states) requiring people to wear seat-belts while driving. It is not common law if no one is injured. It is not equity law — one can be compelled to wear the seat-belt, but there is no court that can charge one who refuses to do so with contempt of court on the spot. Furthermore, there is no contract. This law has to have another status — admiralty law. This is a civil jurisdiction of compelled performance, which also carries criminal penalties. However, it only applies to international contracts. Freeman's point is that laws such as seat-belt laws have the status of admiralty law, but they are called statutes. They are based on contracts and they prefigure punishment if the contract is broken.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

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because they are part of a system involving agreements that are not voluntary, knowable or intentional. Common law activists can cause a lot of trouble for judges and law enforcement because they know the law and they have good arguments. According to them, federal and state governments have undermined the traditional common law system without admitting it openly. The government, however, knows what radical localists fail to acknowledge: that what is "right" has to do more with power than with reason or truth.

Here one illustration may help clarify the radical localist position. One day Ed was very excited. He produced a court decision which said that a bank does not have the right to confiscate property from someone who refuses to pay interest on a loan. But such a document was not issued by an official court. Rather, it was written by a non-state, non-county "common law court."[42] On the whole, radical localist ideology is seductive and attractive. It promises a simple, more logical and more transparent society informed by American history. It is far from irrational and it seems to be justified by the government's behavior.

2. Traditional Catholicism at St. Marys

Ed and his cohorts are traditional Catholics. A possible connection between religious beliefs and radical-localist political attitudes can be seen in another case: that of St. Marys — a town in X County, Kansas. It is hard to imagine a place more suitable for traditional Catholic beliefs.[43] In a way, it typifies the whole political-religious-radical scene today. St. Marys has about 1700 inhabitants with strong anti-government sentiments. It is mainly a Catholic community sharply divided in two separate groups:

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42. On the same occasion, Ed also voiced support for Tom Schauf's candidacy for the Presidency. Schauf is a retired certified public accountant, who in a brochure argued that if the government and ordinary people did not have to pay interest on the printing of money and bank loans, America would be free once again — free from debts, economic pressures and from the threat of a "cashless society" in which "they" have absolute control over the public.

43. It has as many people who protest their taxes as nearby cities twice the size. Farmers regularly report to the police that they have seen "black helicopters," and some people stockpile food and firearms in order to survive the alleged coming invasion of the one-world government. "Black helicopters" are believed to belong to the UN, the alleged organ of "one-world government." They may very well be either military helicopters from Fort Riley, a military base some 40 miles away, or police helicopters searching for illegal hemp fields. Rumors of "black helicopters" may stem from the 1980s movie *Red Dawn*, where black Soviet helicopters launch an invasion of the US in the midwest. For years, the Posse Commitatus has been strong in St. Marys. As a local town's council member put it: "we have a disproportionate number of people with right-wing, pro-militia and anti-government ideas." See Matthew Ebnet's article on St. Marys in the *Kansas City Star* (May 12, 1997).

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one, liberal; the other, traditional. The latter is concentrated on the old campus of Saint Mary's College, which was bought by the Society of Pius X in 1978 and is headed by the charismatic Ramon Anglès. Many think there is a relation between this society and anti-government sentiments. Both are anti-modernist, anti-feminist and anti-capitalist. Traditional Catholicism also rejects globalization as the mandate of one-world government.

Pope Pius X (who was pope between 1903 and 1914) is best known for his anti-modernism. The Society of St. Pius X (SSPX) was founded in Switzerland in November 1970 by archbishop Marcel Lefebvre. Its main objective is to keep Church traditions alive, in opposition to the Second Vatican Council (1962) and its resolutions, e.g., that the Mass be held in languages other than Latin; the call for dialogue with Protestants; more toleration of other religions; less emphasis on daily rituals, etc. In short, the SSPX was founded to combat modernization and secularization. In 1988, this controversy led to Lefebvre's excommunication — something the SSPX does not acknowledge, claiming there was no schism.

Besides modernism, liberalism — the belief that one religion is as good as another — is the SSPX' main enemy. As anti-liberal Catholic thinkers such as Felix Sarda and Juan Donoso Cortès argue, if one doubts tradition, then everything is up for grabs. At first sight, the SSPX message appears banal: it preaches peace and non-violence, while calling for more traditional values and virtues. When it comes to concrete social questions, however, it is no longer uncontroversial.[44] On legal and social matters, Catholic fundamentalism resembles the legal fundamentalism of radical localists. Both believe that any alteration of original documents leads to betrayal of the original ideas. The assumpion here is that this is done by those working for "the enemy," i.e., the Anti-Christ, Communism or One-World Government. The goal of fundamentalism is thus to restore the original ideas and a static, pre-modern society. This is what Pope Michael I, the Kansas Pope, teaches. According to him, the Anti-Christ represents the spiritual power of Satan and is sustained by the

44. Lefebvre doubted that his message would get across: "the entire press is in the big hands of the big liberal anti-Catholic trusts, in the hands of Freemasonry." He did, however, indicate a possible solution: "when Marshal Pètain came to power . . . (he) immediately suppressed Freemasonry: there was no more freedom of the press; pornography was outlawed and banished . . . The serious sin, the capital sin, the mortal sin of General de Gaulle was to have let back into France Freemasonry, Communism, and everything that Marshal Pètain had banished." See Marcel Lefebvre, "The Mystery of Jesus Christ," in *Angelus*, Vol. XX, No. 4 (1997), p. 5.

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actual state of the world.[45] His views are even more conservative than those held by the SSPX. In collaboration with T. Stanfill Benns, he wrote *Will the Catholic Church Survive the Twentieth Century?*[46] and publishes numerous pamphlets. His message is that the Anti-Christ has arrived and he agrees with Brother Michel who, in his book on the message of Fatima,[47] claims that the final message is that the devil has also invaded the Church. Thus the enemy is everywhere and the Church has to be completely re-organized to restore the old order.

Will the Catholic Church Survive the 20th Century? claims that the Anti-Christ is now everywhere — even in the Vatican. The first task is to identify this Anti-Christ. One thing is clear: the Anti-Christ "will be of the Jewish race."[48] Here the problematic relation between Jews and the Catholic Church turns into an open antagonism. The SSPX is the link between mainstream Catholicism and the Kansas Pope. In *Angelus*, its leading US journal,[49] the antagonism is in the open. The Jews' hidden goal is allegedly to erase all differences and destroy all religious beliefs. The authors quote a reputed Jewish newspaper: "The great ideal of Judaism is that the whole world should be imbued with Jewish teaching, and that in a universal fraternity of nations — an enlarged Judaism — all separate races and religions should disappear."[50] Supposedly, the Jews were behind the Renaissance and the Reformation, as well as the French and the Russian revolutions. The very slogan "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" was meant to destroy traditional authority. It was formulated by Freemasons, whose organization, the Masonry, is seen as a Jewish institution. Although the Freemasons are not Jews, they serve Jewish interests. The destruction of true belief takes place in three stages: Capitalism; Liberalism and Socialism; and finally Communism. Benns

45. His name is David Bawden, he is 37 years old and lives with his mother in a small house on the plains, close to St. Marys. He studied at Saint Marys College, but quit because SSPX had not officially broken with the Vatican. In 1996, he "became" Pope and, according to him, his congregation consists of 50 people around the US.

46. Their answer to this question — the whole book *Will the Catholic Church Survive the Twentieth Century?* (Belvue, Kansas: The King of Christ, undated) — can be summarized as "No — if we do not elect a new Pope with the true faith."

47. This book is summarized on the Internet (www.fatima.org/third.html). The story is about how Our Lady appeared in Fatima, Portugal, in 1917 for a sister Lucy and revealed some "secrets."

48. Benns and Bawden, *op. cit.* p. 117.

49. This journal is published in Kansas City, Missouri, not far from St. Marys.

50. Michael Crowdy and Kenneth Nowak Crowdy, "The Mystery of the Jewish People in History," in *Angelus*, Vol. XX, No. 4 (1997), p. 20.

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and Bawden even speculate that Paul VI (who was pope between 1963 and 1978) may have been a Jew, or at least a Freemason.[51] One of his predecessors, John XXIII, who was pope between 1958 and 1963, is also accused of having helped Jews flee from Hungary in 1944 without caring for their salvation, i.e., without having them baptized.

The authors of *Will the Catholic Church Survive the Twentieth Century?* list the similarities in the aims of Jews, The Knights Templar, Freemasons, the New Age Movement, and Paul VI. The argument is based on "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" and the myth of a "Priory of Sion." The Priory was allegedly founded by the Knights Templar in 1090 and is considered the source of most secret societies: the Freemasons, the Illuminati, the Rosi-Crucians, etc. The Priory is regarded as deriving through a bloodline from Christ and Mary Magdalene. According to the legend, these two escaped to France and, due to the intermarriage between the royal houses of Europe and the Priory infiltration of them, the Kings and Queens of Europe are secret members of the Priory and children of Jesus.[52] Paradoxically, this creates a link with the Christian Identity movement whose predecessor, British Israelism, claims that the ancient bloodline of King David is continued in the succession to Britain's throne. Thus, according to Benns and Bawden, both Jews and anti-Semites are agents of the Anti-Christ and their common goal is world-wide control, one-world government, the hegemony of the UN, the belief that Christ was just a common man. Even the SSPX is included in this huge conspiracy. Thus even Cardinal Lefebvre is suspected of being a Freemason. This is a very pessimistic view but, as Michael I writes in his pamphlet "In God We Trust," there is hope, since "the Fathers tell of two Anti-Christs. One is the Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition, spoken of by St. Paul; the other, the system that puts him in power." Accordingly, this system — capitalism, materialism, banks, credit cards, urban culture, etc. — has to be fought. Otherwise the "Man of Sin" will triumph.

No compromise is possible between God and Satan. The Pope in

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51. Evidence indicating Paul VI's true identity is the following: According to the book of Revelation, the number of the Beast (the Anti-Christ) is 666. Paul VI is the sixth Paul, was elected in June, the sixth month, and coronated at the same time. Upside down his signature even seems to read: "666"! The Anti-Christ has many faces. There are a number of ways to identify him. "Bo" Gritz, a neo-Nazi, relates all this to the six-pointed star of Judaism: "666, a six within a six within a six. Six sides, six angles, six points." See Stern, *op. cit.* p. 30.

52. The full story of the "Priory of Sion" is told in Michael Baigent *et. al. Det Hellige Blod og den Hellige Gral* (Lynge: Bogan, 1982).

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Kansas is just one man, and his followers are few. But his ideas are a clear expression of a radical localism with sharp teeth behind friendly smiles. It is another instance of the seductiveness of conspiracy theories: they make the modern world understandable and they identify an enemy and a scapegoat.

3. The Washitaw Empire

Conspiracy theories are often at the very core of radical localism. This is best exemplified by the "Washitaw Empire." Allegedly, this empire is the remnant of the oldest settlement in the territory of the so called "USA."[53] It has nothing to do with "Indians" or "Native Americans." According to its main spokesperson, the Empress, her ancestors originally came from Africa: "We are the aborigines — the dark-skinned, bushy-haired original inhabitants of 'so-called' north and south America (Muu, Afrmuurican)."[54] "Muu" and "Afrmuurican" allude to the myth of Mu or Mur — a lost continent like Atlantis. Afrmuurican sounds almost like "Afro-American" pronounced in a midwestern or southern accent. Allegedly, these are the original names for America, and even the "name of all the lands of the world."[55] The people of present day India also knew this. The "proof" is that this is the sound of the sacred cow — "Muu" (!). At any rate, according to the Empress, "a true history will show that all the continents were once connected, and that the southeastern section of the 'said' United States was actually part of Northwest Africa and South America." Most experts today believe the continents may have been originally connected. But that was a long time before humanity first appeared.

The Empress is also familiar with some post-structuralism. Thus she uses the term "his-story" to describe "Euro-centric" narratives, including the one that says the "Indians" were the first American inhabitants. She claims that similar ancient pyramids can be found in Egypt, China and America, implying a common origin.[56] The archeological evidence here is rather weak, and the Egyptian link has been systematically refuted. The claim about a pre-Columbian and "pre-red" civilization is probably

53. Umaralli Shabazz Bey, *We are the Washitaw* (Columbia: via USA, The Washtitaw Empire, 1996).

54. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

56. The first versions of this myth in the 19th century combined many loose elements to make the myth appear probable. See Robert Wauchope, *Lost Tribes and Sunken Continents* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962).

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inspired by Ivan Van Sertima's book, which is based on very questionable evidence, e.g., the similarity between pre-Columbian sculptures and the anatomy of black African faces.[57] At any rate, the Washitaw Empress uses all of this to make specific legal claims: "Muurs developed one of the first known civilizations and governments . . . European nobility was well aware of the sanctity of the Empire, and quite deliberate in preserving an eternal enclave for the ancient nobility of the so-called 'New World' . . . In 1805, the American ministers of Spain proposed, as a solution to the question of boundary disputes, declaring the Washitaw area as a neutral strip . . . This zone of neutrality was to serve as a safe haven for recently exiled French royalists and the indigeneous Imperial family of nations. Our neutral territory has been preserved by international treaties and conventions."[58] If this were true, the Washitaw territory would not be part of the US. Its members would not be US citizens, subject to US laws.

The Empress supports her land claims by referring to the Louisiana Purchase and the 1805 Maison Rouge land grant. Much of this account could be readily dismissed, were it not for one fact: the designation "Washita," which is synonymous with "Wichita" and "Ouachita" (French for Washitaw) appears on maps of Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas. In Caddo Native American languages,[59] the word "Washita" simply means "Mississippi." These Caddo-speaking tribes[60] included three main groups with similar cultural customs: the Pawnee, the Wichita, and the Caddo. These tribes may have had a common origin in Louisiana, in present-day Ouachita County, and migrated North several hundred years ago.[61] The areas to which they moved correspond roughly to the areas bearing the name "Washitaw" or variations thereof.[62] Thus the

57. Ivan Van Sertima, *They Came Before Columbus* (New York: Random House, 1976). He is probably right, however, in arguing that black people came with the Spaniards and, therefore, that the presence of blacks in America, if not pre-Columbian, is at least much older than usually assumed.

58. Bey, *op. cit.*, p. 12f.

59. John R. Swanton, *The Indian Tribes of North America* (City of Washington: The Smithsonian Institution, 1968) p. 205. According to Bill Yenne, *The Encyclopedia of North American Indian Tribes* (New York: Crescent Books, 1986), p. 183, it means "big arbor" or "big platform."

60. Clark Wissler, *Indians of the United States* (New York: Anchor Books, 1989), p. 151.

61. Carl Waldman, *Atlas of the North American Indian* (New York: Facts on File, 1985), p. 40.

62. Cf. an ordinary map of the US with the map in Waldman, *op. cit.* p. 40 showing patterns of migration.

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reason for places with such names in the southeast, Texas and the plains is probably related to the migration of Caddo-speaking tribes.

The Empress also cites John Sibley's notes, written April 5, 1805 during the Lewis and Clark expedition.[63] Sibley writes that the Choctaw tribe was "liked by neither red nor white people."[64] The Empress sees this as evidence that the Choctaws were black and that they were "Muurs." More likely, however, it means either that it was a small black or partly black community, perhaps adopted by Indians or of mixed blood; or that it was an Indian tribe disliked by other tribes because they co-operated with the white settlers. The first hypothesis is supported by another note from Sibley. Accordingly, the Natchitotes (a Caddo tribe in Louisiana) "live in a village . . . near . . . Lac de Muire. Their original language is the same as the Yattassee, but speak Caddo, and most of them French. The French inhabitants have great respect for this nation, and a number of very decent families have a mixture of their blood in them."[65] The second hypothesis is based on the fact that most Caddo tribes were agricultural and, thus, rather "peaceful."[66] They had good relations with the French, which may account for their being shunned by other "red" people.

On the whole, the Empress' account contradicts almost all serious research and is supported only by conspiracy theories, post-structuralist speculations and New Age fantasies. However, since there is some support for her claims (some tribes were granted autonomy in different treaties, etc.) her account may be seen as part of the Louisana tradition of belief in the absurd and of mixing narratives and cultures. More likely, it may be part of a radical political project and the "Washitaw Empire" really wants total autonomy.

The Washitaw Empire has a good deal in common with the "Republic of Texas" and some neo-Nazi groups. Both "nations" want to be autonomous and have "diplomatic" relations. Even if the "Republic of Texas" probably wants a "white" republic, they share a common, anti-federal government objective with the Washitaw Empire. The relation to neo-Nazis is more complex. According to *The Economist*: "The Sovereign Citizen Resource Centre (a proto-Nazi group G.D.) . . . offers citizenship

63. See Stephen E. Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997).

64. Bey, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

65. Cited in John R.Swanton, *Source Material on the History and Ethnology of the Caddo Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996) p. 76.

66. Waldman, *op. cit.* p. 33.

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in the 'Washitaw' nation plus freedom from all taxes and regulations. Entry into this republic costs $65 for a new birth certificate and $150 for a passport, not to mention fees for car and driving licenses."[67] None of this requires the co-operation of the Washitaw Empire. Yet a web-site provides detailed information about the Washitaw Empire.[68]

Conclusions

Radical localism has a resonance. What it claims is not simply "ideological" or false. Its support is fueled by the actions, or sometimes non-action, of the federal authorities. The FBI and the ATF killed innocent people at Ruby Ridge and Waco, and they came close to doing the same in Fort Davis, Texas, where a faction of the "Republic of Texas" took some hostages in the Spring of 1997. Also, the government's failure to open a full investigation of Waco has increased distrust of the federal government. The role of this failure in the Oklahoma City bombing is well known. The unfavorable public response to this last event may have led to a turning away from whatever use of violence some radical localists may have entertained. Thus today even the remnants of neo-Nazi or KKK propaganda sound like non-racist radical localism.

One reason for the emergence of radical localism is the longing for simplicity. Postmodern life is full of contradictions and ambivalence. The county sheriff, his posse and problem-solving at the local level is a counter-image to the present situation. It has some historical support. In the midwest, there is a strong tradition of radical democracy. It is part of the so-called frontier spirit.[69] In the midwest, there is also the tradition of "prairie populism." In the late 19th century, the Populist Party won over 40% of the votes in several Rocky Mountain and Prairie states — in Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming and North Dakota.[70] Although this was over a century ago, many issues raised by the Populist Party then are still alive among radical localists today. One main attraction of populist or radical localist ideas remains the poverty among many midwestern farmers. The fact that they are farmers is also relevant: being at the mercy of banks is a strong impetus for anti-Finance Capitalism.

67. See "http://www.nuts" in *The Economist* (March 8, 1996), pp. 25.
68. http://www.washitaw.com.
69. Fredrick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1994); Patricia Limerick, *et. al.*, eds., *Trails* (Lawrence: The University of Kansas Press, 1991).
70. Jeffrey Ostler, *Prairie Populism* (Lawrence: The University of Kansas Press, 1993), p. 3.

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It is misleading to label these people as simply "anti-government." They strongly believe in the US Constitution. Rather, they criticize the lack of *real* federalism: the lack of individual and state autonomy stipulated by the Constitution. This raises the question of whether today the people are really sovereign, or whether the "republic" has become too much of a "democracy," i.e., whether the people can control their representatives. Those who emphasize common law have a point: commercial and bureaucratic interests have taken over the will of the people in legal practices. Yet the media and government authorities treat these people as "right-extremist" fools. This practice may backfire and help the various populist groups become unified in a viable political force. Although populists lack a rigorous theoretical framework, populism does have roots in the American tradition. Incompatible with modern bureaucratic-centralist states, it warrants serious scrutiny as a traditional alternative to an increasingly problem-ridden postmodern society. If a populist resurgence does ocur, the next century may well pick up where the last one left off.

In this context, "1989," i.e., the end of the Cold War, is of the utmost importance. Frank Adler has argued that the "French" nationalist side of the American Federation was strengthened by both the New Deal and the Cold War.[71] The exhaustion of the former and the end of the latter has deprived the US government of a totalizing enemy to legitimate its immense administrative apparatus. In a perplexing turn of events, various localist and populist groups today unambiguously identify the federal government (and occasionally "the Jews" who allegedly run it) as the new enemy, while the federal government and the power elite have been attempting to cast the Muslim world as the new *external* enemy and all those who are against Big Government as the *internal* enemy. In view of the collapse of the Left and, more generally, of all opposition in the US, a healthy populism, cleansed of all racism, anti-Semitism and other assorted lunacies, may be the only radical alternative to a statist system that increasingly reduces citizens to clients in ways not altogether different from now defunct bureaucratic centralist regimes.

71. See Frank Adler, "The Original Model of American Democracy and the Turn to Statism," in *Telos* 104 (Summer 1995), pp.68-76.

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Carl Schmitt on Friends, Enemies and the Political

Andrew Norris

If the work that Carl Schmitt produced during the Weimar Republic is of interest today, it is in large part because of his insistence on the conceptual autonomy of the political. Like Hannah Arendt, Schmitt categorically distinguishes the political from the economic, the technological, and the legal; and, like her, he also criticizes liberalism for muddying and obscuring these distinctions.[1] As one might expect from an eminent jurist, he places particular emphasis on the last — the distinction between the legal and the political. The main lines of his argument are clear enough: the concept of law is defined by the criteria of what is and is not in accord with legal rules and norms; the concept of the political, by the criteria of friend and enemy. The identification of friend and enemy is an existential decision which cannot be anticipated by law. Moreover, the political is not simply distinct from the legal but prior to it in that no system of norms can be developed or applied without a moment of decision that exceeds the

1. See Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, tr. by George Schwab (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 25-26; and "On the Counterrevolutionary Philosophy of the State," in Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*, tr. by George Schwab (London: The MIT Press, 1985), p. 65: "Today nothing is more modern than the onslaught against the political. American financiers, industrial technicians, Marxist socialists, and anarchic syndicalist revolutionaries unite in demanding that the biased rule of politics over unbiased economic management be done away with. There must no longer be political problems, only organizational-technical and economic-sociological problems." Arendt does not discuss the works of Schmitt addressed here. But in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* she does refer in passing to his "arresting" and "ingenious" discussions of law and democracy; she also distinguishes him sharply from "the Nazi's own brand of political and legal theorists." See Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, new edition with added prefaces (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), p. 339, note 65.

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regulation of those norms. Thus the state as the political actor cannot be reduced to a legal system, nor can what legitimacy it has be derived from law. Particularly in an emergency or state of exception, a sovereign "either/or" decision must be made, and this decision cannot be derived or inferred from the norms that obtain in the normal situation. Because of the inherent limitations of laws, rules, and norms, the political decision that identifies friend and enemy must be made independently.

The main complaint against this formulation is familiar enough: Schmitt allegedly emphasizes the limitations of law only to glorify the decision that exceeds the regulation of any law. Insofar as rights are defined and guaranteed by law, Schmitt's existential concept of the political makes these rights vulnerable to unregulated political decision. This is found to be all the more distressing, since Schmitt stresses the decision's role in the most extreme case, i.e., war, in the political identification of the existential enemy. As he puts it: "Only the actual participants can correctly recognize, understand, and judge the concrete situation and settle the extreme case of conflict. Each participant is in a position to judge whether the adversary intends to negate his opponent's way of life and therefore must be repulsed or fought in order to preserve one's own form of existence."[2] The bellicose nihilism this suggests is often seen as a causal factor in Schmitt's own active participation in the Nazi movement in the 1930s. His political theory, it is alleged, is opportunistic, with only one consistent commitment — to the irrational. Thus Richard Wolin claims that the central roles played in Schmitt's political theory by the political decision and the threat of war are both motivated by a "vitalism" and a "*politics of authenticity*," with the aim of overturning the vapid bourgeois order.[3] The result is a

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2. *The Concept of the Political*, *op. cit.*, p. 27; and compare p. 35. Unless otherwise noted, all references to this text are to the 1932 edition. On the differences between this edition and its predecessors, see Heinrich Meier, *Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss: The Hidden Dialogue*, tr. by J. Harvey Lomax (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995).

3. Richard Wolin, "Carl Schmitt: The Conservative Revolutionary Habitus and the Aesthetics of Horror," in *Political Theory*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (August 1992), p. 432. Wolin's reading of Schmitt is fairly typical. Compare, for instance, John P. McCormick's recent *Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberalism: Against Politics as Technology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), which takes it as a given that "the political" for Schmitt is "the transhistorically legitimated human propensity toward violent existential conflict" (pp. 17, 96, and 110). "The political, the postulation of an enemy . . . serves to distract from the discomfort . . . of not knowing who oneself [or] one's culture . . . is in modernity" (p. 233). Cf. also William Scheuerman, *Between the Norm and the Exception: The Frankfurt School and the Rule of Law* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1994), pp. 31 and 32.

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glorification of violence.[4] In the end, politics for Schmitt is a matter of conflict and war, and the true criterion of the political is the enemy. Who one's political "friends" are is determined only in the encounter with the enemy, and they are valued only insofar as they allow for success in the resulting war. As Martin Jay puts it, "the hated other [is] needed to create the solidarity of the homogeneous self."[5]

This reading of *The Concept of the Political* is unwarranted. While some might not be surprised that Schmitt put his intellectual powers in the service of the Nazi Party when it came to power, although most of his colleagues and students were shocked, it does not follow that Schmitt's concept of the political is itself necessarily totalitarian.[6] Schmitt's attempt to characterize politics in terms of friendship and enmity is both more complicated and more interesting than his critics suggest. In particular, his provocative formulations of the friend/enemy distinction should not lead to the

4. This line of interpretation is largely derived from Karl Löwith's 1935 essay "The Occasional Decisionism of Carl Schmitt," in *Heidegger and European Nihilism*, tr. by Gary Steiner (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995). Interestingly enough, Löwith elsewhere makes essentially the same claim about Germans as a class that he does of Schmitt in particular: "It is nothing more than insecurity that has given the Germans their political and racial self-confidence after Hitler. They have never been sure of themselves, nor do they know who they are. They constantly need an enemy, or at least a scapegoat, in order to gain self-determination. Because of this, the 'Aryan' is pure fiction provided he is not anti-Semitic." See Karl Löwith, *My Life in Germany Before and After 1933*, tr. by Elizabeth King (London: The Athlone Press, 1994), p. 140. To complicate matters further, in yet another essay he characterizes Europe itself in these terms. See the first line of his "European Nihilism: Reflections on the Spiritual and Historical Background of the European War": "Europe is a concept that develops not from out of itself but rather from out of its essential contrast with Asia." See *Heidegger and European Nihilism*, *op. cit.*, p. 173. The context makes it clear that here Löwith is drawing uncritically on Hegel's analysis of the concept of Europe. It is ironic that the concept of political identity and difference Hegel uses is closely related to the political concepts of identity and difference Schmitt develops — concepts of which Löwith is deeply suspicious.

5. Martin Jay "The Reassertion of Sovereignty in a Time of Crisis: Carl Schmitt and Georges Bataille," in *Force Fields: Between Intellectual History and Cultural Critique* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 193, note 9.

6. There is a tendency to make what are little more than *ad hominem* attacks against figures like Schmitt and Heidegger, and to treat their actions as embodiments or enactments of their philosophical arguments and analyses. The following statement by Lukács is noteworthy, not for its eccentricity but only for its baldness: "There can be no *innocent* reactionary *Weltunschauung*. . . . From Nietzsche to Simmel, Spengler and Heidegger, et. al., a *straight* path leads to Hitler." See Georg Lukács, "On the Responsibility of Intellectuals," tr. by Severin Schurger, in *Telos*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Spring 1969), p. 124. But actions do not automatically follow from philosophy. The relations between philosophy and politics and between theory and biography are vexed, and they are no simpler to sort out in the cases of "Nazi" philosophers than in any other.

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conclusion that he reduces politics to a function of war. Schmitt's theoretical position requires a prior substantive commitment to relations of "friendship" and social solidarity. His account of political authority, in particular, rests on an almost Hegelian understanding of the individual's relation to the community and one's own mortality. The friend/enemy criterion defines a particular form of life, one in which group identity is valued above physical existence.[7] To properly understand Schmitt's work it must be considered not as a rejection of an established moral order but as a response to a culture of nihilism in which meaning — rather than value — is ebbing away.

There are a number of reasons to be wary of accepting the interpretation of Schmitt as, in Alan Megill's phrase, "a prophet of extremity." To begin with, Schmitt is no Ernst Jünger, though he has been portrayed as such.[8] Jünger was a professional soldier whose revelatory experience of the front line in WWI transformed his life, while Schmitt consistently displays a Hobbesian concern with physical security. It is certainly true that he is of his time and place in the stress he places on decisive violence. But it is less clear what function this has in his thinking. In this regard it is extremely relevant that Schmitt's references to physical conflict in *The Concept of the Political* are defensive in nature. As Heinrich Meier notes, Schmitt's imagination reacts to an attack from without; it does not pursue aggressive action of its own.[9] Indeed, Schmitt himself at one point defines the existential quality of war in precisely defensive terms: "If physical destruction of human life is not motivated by an existential *threat* to one's own way of life, then it cannot be justified."[10] Moreover, this interpretation of Schmitt ignores his account of the "equal chance." George Schwab argues that Schmitt developed this in an effort to protect the Weimar Republic from those extremist political parties that would subvert it from

7. Schmitt is not the only one in this context to take a polemical interest in the question of the proper form of life. As Peter Galison demonstrates in his "Aufbau/Bauhaus: Logical Positivism and Architectural Modernism," in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Summer 1990), the positivists of the Vienna Circle were adamant that their principle of analysis implied a form of life, one in which groups — *pace* Schmitt — are wholly reducible to their individual members. Where Bentham used this same argument in an attempt to develop a social science that would maximize the aggregate pleasure of isolated individuals, Neurath et. al. saw that the principle had a more specific function than this, as it resisted the organicism of the Right.

8. See for instance "The Occasional Decisionism of Carl Schmitt," *op. cit.*, pp. 146 and 275. See also Joseph Bendersky's critical discussion of Jeffery Herf's claims that Schmitt, like Jünger, was responding in his writings to the experience of the front, in "Carl Schmitt and the Conservative Revolution," in *Telos* 72 (Summer 1987), pp. 28-29.

9. Meier, *Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss*, *op. cit.*, pp.18-19.

10. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, *op. cit.*, p. 49, emphasis added.

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within, as the Nazis did.[11] Whether this is true or not, Schmitt's insistence that only those political parties committed to the maintenance of the constitution should be allowed to compete for political office reveals a commitment to stability which is incompatible with a celebration of political will. Most importantly, the simplest form of the decisionist allegation relies on a poor understanding of Schmitt's friend/enemy distinction that does not do justice to the complexities of his work.

That all said, interpretations of Schmitt that center on his alleged "occasional" belligerence remain plausible, because of the stress he places on the threat of physical death implicit in the encounter with the enemy. It is this, he argues, that establishes the existential independence of the political: "The specific political distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is that between friend and enemy"; and, "The friend, enemy, and combat concepts receive their real meaning precisely because they refer to the real possibility of physical killing."[12] Because of this structural configuration, he has far more to say about the enemy than the friend. Since *The Concept of the Political* understands the state in terms of the political, it characterizes the state primarily in terms of external conflict rather than in terms of specific internal social structures.[13] Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to think that what Schmitt means by an enemy can be grasped without understanding what he means by a friend, however difficult this latter task may be. This is not merely true because, as the old saw has it, a valley cannot be imagined without a hill. It is also because some meaning must be given to the notion of the friend in order to make any sense of Schmitt's distinction between the private and the public.[14]

"The enemy," Schmitt writes, "is not merely any competitor or just any partner of a conflict in general. He is also not the private adversary whom one hates. An enemy exists only when, at least potentially, one

11. For a helpful discussion of this doctrine and the context in which it was advanced, see chapter 5 of George Schwab, *The Challenge of the Exception* (1970), 2nd edition (New York and London: Greenwood Press, 1989).

12. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, *op. cit.*, pp. 26 and 33.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

14. Jacques Derrida's reading of Schmitt has the virtue of recognizing that this is an interpretive problem. Unfortunately, Derrida does not attempt to solve it. "Hence a first possibility of semantic slippage and inversion: the friend (*amicus*) can also be an enemy (*hostis*) . . . Another way of saying that at every point when this border [between public and private] is threatened, fragile, porous, contestable . . . the Schmittian discourse collapses. It is against the threat of this ruin that his discourse takes form." See Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, tr. by George Collins (New York: Verso, 1997), p. 88. It remains to be seen if the distinction between *inimicus* and *hostis* is in fact a paradoxical or unstable one.

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fighting collectivity of people confronts a similar collectivity. The enemy is solely the public enemy. . . ."[15] Why must this be so? What justification does Schmitt have for this distinction between the *hostis* and the *inimicus*? Given that Schmitt's intention in *The Concept of the Political* is to work toward "a definition [of the political] in the sense of the criterion,"[16] it cannot be merely that political matters are by definition public matters that involve groups of people. Since Schmitt intends to explain the state in terms of the political, and not *vice versa*, it does not matter that today the state is understood to be "the political status of an organized people in an enclosed territorial unit."[17] It must instead be the case that the enemy of which Schmitt speaks cannot be conceived apart from a notion of friendship in which people are brought into "collectivities." If this were not the case, there is no reason why the mugger on the street should not be seen as triggering political conflicts.

Here a contrast with Arendt may be helpful. She argues that political action is analogous to artistic performances, such as dance, and not to solitary arts, such as sculpture. On her account, both dance and political activity aim at a revelation of the actor that is simply impossible in the absence of an audience containing a multiplicity of perspectives and judges. Thus, political action is inherently public.[18] Schmitt, however, can appeal to no such an argument: for one does not need the presence of others either to face violent death or to defend oneself from it.

Schmitt relies on the threat to the individual's own physical life to draw out the "existential" quality of the political. But this threat is hardly identical with the threat to the collectivity's "way of life" or "form of existence." In order to bridge the gap between the two, Schmitt must present the *Lebensform* as in some way prior to the individual. This is why Schmitt never acknowledges as his own the problem that bedevils Hobbes: if individuals merely enter into a polity to protect their lives, how can that polity ever demand that they risk or sacrifice their lives? As Schmitt explicitly states,

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15. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, *op. cit.*, pp. 28 and 51: "A private person has no political enemies."

16. *Ibid.*, p. 26

17. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

18. See Hannah Arendt, "What is Freedom?" in *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin, 1968). Schmitt's concept of the political also incorporates "the pluralism of spiritual life." See Carl Schmitt, "The Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations," tr. by Matthias Konzett and John McCormick, in *Telos* 96 (Summer 1993), p. 142. But this plurality is not what distinguishes the political from the private. Cf. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

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"the right to demand from its members the readiness to die" implies that the state has a priority over the individual.[19] Indeed, this is one of the most important features of the Schmittian state. It is "by virtue of [its] power over the physical life of men [that] the political community transcends all other associations or societies."[20] Since the enemy is defined as a threat to those relations of "friendship" internal to the state, it follows that the latter are not entirely a function of the external relation to the enemy.[21] If Schmitt is at all coherent, then Wolin must be wrong in claiming that Schmitt's "existential definition of politics in terms of the primacy of the friend-enemy grouping necessitates the relinquishing of all claims to the 'good life' and instead to rest content with 'mere life' — namely, existential self-preservation."[22] If

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19. Even writers sympathetic to Schmitt do not seem to fully appreciate his point. Thus Bendersky does recognize that for Schmitt power does not produce relations of political friendship and that the distinction between friend and enemy must precede the onset of hostilities. See his *Carl Schmitt: Theorist for the Reich* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 93 and 89. But he does not explain what this would involve. Similarly, he notes in passing that "Many of the factors that could motivate friend-enemy oppositions, such as economic competition or the defense of one's homeland, were quite rational" (pp. 92-93). But he does not acknowledge that this is hardly self-evident. What needs to be explained is the reason for sacrificing one's life for a polity one could hardly enjoy in death.

20. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47. Curiously, Schmitt himself, for all his ambivalence toward Hobbes, may not have understood this decisive difference between himself and his predecessor. In his 1938 book on Hobbes, he claims repeatedly that Hobbes denies the citizen the right to resist the state. See Carl Schmitt, *Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes: Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol*, tr. by George Schwab and Erna Hilfstein (London: Greenwood Press, 1996), pp. 46 and 53. But this is not true: Hobbes has to grant such a right in cases where the state directly threatens the individual's life, as the protection of life is a necessary (if not sufficient) condition of political legitimacy. Cf. Hobbes, *Leviathan* (New York: Penguin, 1968), p. 199.

21. Leo Strauss has his own slant on this. He writes: "Hobbes conceives the relation between the *status naturalis* and culture (in the widest sense) as an opposition; here all that needs to be stressed is the fact that Hobbes characterizes the *status naturalis* as the *status belli* and that 'the nature of war consisteth *not in actual fighting*, but in the known *disposition* thereto' (Leviathan, ch.xiii). That means, in Schmitt's terminology, the *status naturalis* is the genuinely political status, for 'the political lies not in the conflict itself . . . . but in behavior determined by this real possibility.' Hence it follows that the political, which Schmitt brings out as fundamental, is the 'state of nature' prior to all culture; Schmitt restores Hobbes' conception of the state of nature to a place of honor. That provides the answer to the question within which genus the specific difference of the political is to be placed: the political is a status of man, indeed, *the* human status in the sense of the 'natural,' the fundamental and extreme status of man." See Leo Strauss, "Comments on Carl Schmitt's *Der Begriff des Politischen*," appendix to Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-88.

22. Wolin, *op. cit.*, p. 443. It is peculiar that Wolin silently refers to Aristotle here, as the claim for the existential priority of the political is ultimately Aristotelian. For the connection between this and the distinction between the good life and mere life, see the first book of Aristotle's *Politics*.

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an often intemperate writer is also capable of subtlety, one might see Schmitt's dedication to *The Concept of the Political* as a clue to this. It reads "In memory of my friend, August Schaetz of Munich, who fell on August 28, 1917, in the assault on Moncelul."

At this point, however, this may seem to be making extremely heavy weather out of a few turns of phrase. But Schmitt explicitly states that: "The political . . . does not describe its own substance, but only the intensity of an association or dissociation of human beings whose motives can be religious, national (in the ethnic or cultural sense), economic, or of another kind and can effect at different times different coalitions and separations."[23] The plainest reading of this is as follows: groups define themselves in a variety of ways. The conflicts that emerge between these various groups are not political until they reach a certain level of intensity — until they pose a threat to the group's existence. The sovereign decision is then made whether or not to go to war in order to resolve the conflict, at which point the conflict becomes political. What is distinctively political, then, is entirely a matter of the conflict with the enemy; the relation with the friend is only a pretext for this conflict. If the final step of this interpretation were correctly taken, in view of Schmitt's claim that the political has an existential priority over all other forms of association, Wolin would be quite right to conclude that Schmitt is committed to the view that "*all the energies of modern life stand in the service of war.*"[24] How then can Schmitt assure his readers that "War is neither the aim nor the purpose nor even the very content of politics"?[25]

"In case of need," Schmitt writes, "the political entity must demand the sacrifice of life. Such a demand is in no way justifiable by the individualism of liberal thought."[26] What *does* justify such a demand? In the longer of the two passages just quoted, Schmitt is wholly unconcerned with the substance or motives of the association that enters into the political conflict. Yet something connected to these motives, which are said to have no specifically political substance, is strong enough to lead men and women to offer their lives for the group. More, it is strong enough that men and women ought to recognize as legitimate the "right" of the state to "demand" their lives. Given the political indifference of the content of the group's motives and beliefs, it can only be this recognition *itself* that makes the group political. When one, for whatever reason,

23. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
24. Wolin, *op. cit.*, p. 439.
25. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, *op. cit.*, pp. 34 and 33.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

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prize the integrity of one's way of life over one's own lives, then he has become political. The threat to human life does not make one political, but serves only as a reminder of one's commitment, of the fact that one's way of life is valued above one's life. Compare, in this regard, the quotation at the beginning of this paragraph with Schmitt's previously cited claim: "If physical destruction of human life is not motivated by an existential threat to one's own way of life, then it cannot be justified." The decisive conflict is between political solidarity and apolitical, liberal individualism: "The negation of the political . . . is inherent in every consistent individualism."[27]

Individualism is an understanding of human freedom at home in a "modern economy," in which "a completely irrational consumption conforms to a totally rationalized production. A marvelously rational mechanism serves one or another demand, always with the same earnestness and precision, be it for a silk purse or poison gas or anything whatsoever."[28] In an individualistic society, "Public life is expected to govern itself. It should be governed by public opinion, the opinion of private individuals. Public opinion, in turn, should be governed by a privately owned press. Nothing in this system is representative; everything is a private matter."[29] Schmitt defines "representation" in Burkean terms, as an individual's ability to embody the body politic, and not to act as a mere functionary for one's constituents.[30] Schmitt in turn identifies the body politic with the constitution — a collective decision about the nature of political unity and

27. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

28. Carl Schmitt, *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*, tr. by G. L Ulmen (London: Greenwood Press, 1996), pp. 14-15.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 28. Schmitt argues elsewhere that "the way from the metaphysical and the moral spheres is through the aesthetic sphere, which is the surest and most comfortable way to the general economization of intellectual life and to a state of mind which finds the core categories of human existence in production and consumption." See Schmitt, "The Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations," *op. cit.*, p. 133. The danger of individualism is thus that it can throw the individual back on his own "spontaneous" desires, most of which are easily constructed by capital. It is absurd to suggest that Enlightenment theories of autonomy are realized in the endless shopping malls of contemporary America; but it is just as absurd to suggest that there is no connection between the two. Marcuse rightly argued that such a critique of culture remains dangerously incomplete as long it fails to address the politics of capitalism (e.g., the friend/enemy divide between the interests of international corporations and those of particular communities). Marcuse, however, errs to the other extreme in his emphasis on the isolated individual and his categorical assertion that, "released from its economic and social content, the concept of the whole has absolutely no concrete meaning in social theory." See Herbert Marcuse "The Struggle Against Liberalism in the Totalitarian View of the State," in *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), p. 20.

30. See Schmitt, *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*, *op. cit.*, pp. 8, 20 and 26.

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identity. Schmitt is critical of legal positivism, in part because a legal system cannot itself generate a constitution, but must always act in the service of one. The essence of politics, for Schmitt, is a homogenous form of identity that both allows for the transcendence of private, physical life and opens the possibility of a particular form of violent conflict.[31]

Compare this interpretation with Leo Strauss's reading of Schmitt: Strauss concludes that, in the absence of an independent moral affirmation of the political, "the affirmation of the political is the affirmation of fighting as such, wholly irrespective of *what* is being fought *for*."[32] This still places too much emphasis on actual combat. As Schmitt put it: "The political does not reside in the battle itself. . . but in the mode of behavior which is determined by this possibility."[33] That mode of behavior is a solidarity that makes possible both self-sacrifice and political authority. In a passage often quoted by his detractors, Schmitt insists that "The high points of politics are simultaneously the moments in which the enemy is, in concrete clarity, recognized as the enemy."[34] "Simultaneously," because such high points of politics are not identical with the recognition of the enemy. It is not that groups need to be constantly at war with one another to be political,[35] but

31. Schmitt's interest in political homogeneity is particularly marked in *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, where he links its absence to the devaluation of the political. It also plays a central role in his discussion of federalism. There he argues that existential conflict is always possible unless there is "a substantial homogeneity, an existential affinity" between the member states of the federation. This makes it clear that such homogeneity is identical to political friendship. See Schmitt, "The Constitutional Theory of Federation (1928)," in *Telos* 91 (Spring 1992), p. 39.

32. Strauss, "Comments on Carl Schmitt's *Der Begriff des Politischen*," *op. cit.*, p. 105.

33. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

35. Cf. Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, tr. by Ellen Kennedy (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988) p. 11. This is not to deny that violent conflict may forge communities. Indeed, this is a fairly common occurrence. As Russell Hardin observes, "Individuals' nationalist sentiments rise during wartime in part because the individuals' fates become more closely tied to the national fate and, for many people perhaps, because wartime mobilization opens individual opportunities. Nationalist sentiments may go far beyond what self-interest would stimulate, but self-interest is there. Once the norm of nationalism takes over the field of play, it begins to reinforce itself. Under wartime conditions of nationalism, individuals begin to have reduced knowledge of alternatives and become less able to judge their own state." See Russell Hardin *One for All: The Logic of Group Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 14. Here Schmitt is asserting a logical priority, not a temporal one. If there is no solidarity allowing for recognition of the authority of the sovereign over life and death, then no conflict, however bloody or extensive, is a conflict between political entities, though it may become one. That such apolitical conflicts are still called wars is of no significance, as Schmitt is not attempting to define politics in terms of war but in terms of the collectivity and the public enemy.

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that the people belonging to them see war and what it demands as a real possibility, i.e., that they are reminded of their commitments, of their willingness to give their lives when the sovereign demands they do so. The relation of friend is not *defined* by the emergence of the enemy, but it is *brought into view* in its true significance. This should make it plain why Schmitt suggests that a loss of meaning and significance attends the eclipse of the political.[36] Life will lack meaning unless it contains commitments cherished above mere physical existence.[37]

Much of the drama and the danger of Schmitt's work is a function of this attempt to use politics to counter nihilism. Though Schmitt's polemical political theory sets itself against the presuppositions of what he finds to be today's "individualistically disintegrated society,"[38] he is hardly a latter-day Tocqueville or a communitarian *a la* Michael Sandel. Where Tocqueville contrasts individualism with a public life of the sort that jury duty might encourage, Schmitt contrasts it with solidarity in the face of the potential enemy.[39] If Tocqueville seeks to broaden personal interests and to temper "the habits of the heart," Schmitt seeks to change the concept of who one are.[40] Politics paves the way for this in such a way that it makes sense to sacrifice one's life, because of the awareness that there will be some other form of survival. Where Schmitt adds decisively to the

36. See Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, *op. cit.*, p. 35; and Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, *op. cit.*, p. 12. A striking similarity emerges here between Schmitt and Heidegger, who in "The Age of the World Picture" complains bitterly that "No one dies for mere values." See Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, tr. by William Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 142.

37. Wolin and others assume that the connection between politics and meaning in Schmitt consists in his alleged belief that violent conflict is the only or the most meaningful form of experience. How rare such a belief would be, if it has ever been held by anyone. Even Jünger does not affirm violence for its own sake, but as a Nietzschean attempt to affirm the technological nihilism that increasingly determines current modes of being. See, Jünger, "Total Mobilization" in *The Heidegger Controvery*, ed. by Richard Wolin (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991).

38. Carl Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, tr. by Guy Oakes (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1986) "Preface," p. 20.

39. See the final third of Chapter XVI of the first volume of *Democracy in America*.

40. There are, however, important parallels between Schmitt and contemporary communitarianism. Will Kymlicka has argued that, while communitarians such as Michael Sandel and Charles Taylor "say there are shared ends that can serve as the basis for a politics of the common good which will be legitimate for all groups in society. . . . they give no examples of such ends or practices." Kymlicka concludes from this silence that "there are no such shared ends." See Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 86. While this exclusion is rather hasty, it is interesting to note the similarity here with the formalism of Schmitt's existential/political commitment. It too remains to be defined.

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analysis of Tocqueville *et. al.* is in his emphasis on authority (and hence commitment) and mortality. Schmitt aligns himself with the Greeks in his insistence that politics be a response to the fragility and futility of human life. He is hostile to individualism, not simply because of his authoritarian tendencies, but also because the form individualism has taken in contemporary society, manifest in the consumption of images, pleasures, and commodities, is simply incapable of addressing this issue.

This helps to understand the significance of Schmitt's almost cryptic note on Hegel in *The Concept of the Political*. "Hegel remains everywhere political in the decisive sense." He "also offers the first polemically political definition of the bourgeois. The bourgeois is an individual who does not want to leave the apolitical riskless private sphere." Finally: "Hegel has . . . advanced a definition of the enemy which has in general been evaded by modern philosophers. The enemy is negated otherness."[41] The first two of these claims become clear in light of an explication of the third. Hegel argues that war is a fundamental possibility of political life, one that is actually beneficial. It is a fundamental possibility, because the state is, *vis-à-vis* other states, an individual, "and individuality essentially implies negation. Hence even if a number of states make themselves into a family, this group as an individual must engender an opposite and create an enemy."[42] It is a beneficial one because, by providing the necessary context for martial courage, war allows the individual to transcend the limited perspective of his place in society: "the important thing here is not personal mettle but aligning oneself with the universal."[43] As Hegel acknowledges, even "robbers and murderers bent on crime" sometimes demonstrate a willingness to risk their lives. Such bravery has a merely negative worth because "it is the negation of externalities, and their alienation, the culmination of courage, is not intrinsically of a spiritual character."[44] That is to say, courage even in a wicked cause has some worth in that it strips away or "alienates" the inessential baggage of life (e.g., the obsession with property). This worth, however, is only negative because it is found in removing or *negating* the inessential, without *affirming* something of real spiritual worth. Quite different is patriotically motivated self-sacrifice: "The intrinsic [or positive] worth

41. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.
42. G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, tr. by T. M. Knox (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), addition to paragraph 324.
43. *Ibid.*, addition to paragraph 327.
44. *Ibid.*, paragraph 327.

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of courage as a disposition is to be found in the genuine, absolute, final end, the sovereignty of the state."[45]

The affinities between this position and Schmitt's are obvious.[46] But where Hegel's commitment to the view that reason must be actual leads him to celebrate the actual virtuous conduct of war, Schmitt never praises war as such and remains silent on the value of courage. For Hegel, the modern state is the highest form of ethical life, and the sacrifices it demands are part of that life. Thus war "is not to be regarded as an absolute evil," as it itself contains an "ethical moment": courage.[47] For Schmitt, war is essentially a political matter; as such, it is as little ethical as it is evil. "If there really are enemies in the existential sense meant here, then it is justified, *but only politically*, to repel them and fight them physically. . . . Justice does not belong to the concept of war."[48] No doubt, the conduct of war is often also sublime, economically wasteful and immoral. But Schmitt cautions against concluding from this that moral, aesthetic, or economic categories should trump political ones. In particular, the attempt to end war because of its immorality may backfire horribly by producing a war to end all wars. Schmitt argues that this could well produce a form of warfare that is "unusually intense and inhuman because, by transcending the limits of the political framework, it simultaneously

45. *Ibid.*, paragraph 328.

46. See Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, *op. cit.*, p. 24, where Schmitt contrasts anti-statist liberalism and Hegel's philosophy of the state.

47. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, *op. cit.*, paragraph 324. Shlomo Avineri argues that, for Hegel, "War is not the health of the state — in it a state's health is put to the test." See Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 199. This could be more accurately said of Schmitt. Indeed, Avineri's own discussions of Hegel's views on both war and the actuality of the rational bring out the fact that, as war is not something merely existent (*real*), it is not an illness the state suffers, but a necessary function of its life and its participation in the dialectic of history, of the actual. To the extent that a woman, for whatever reason, finds her womanhood to be confirmed or realized in giving birth, her labor is not a test of that womanhood so much as a fundamental expression of it. Cf. Avineri, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-127 and 194-207. Even so, it would be a mistake to conclude that Hegel prefers war to peace. There is no reason to assume that all of the necessary functions of a state are equally desirable. Cf. Errol E. Harris, "Hegel's Theory of Sovereignty, International Relations, and War," in *Selected Essays on G. W. F. Hegel*, ed. by Lawrence Stepelevich (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1993), p. 112.

48. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, *op. cit.*, p. 49, emphasis added. Hegel's conflation of the moral and the political may be what Schmitt has in mind when, in discussing those "genuine political philosophers" who see man as "a dangerous and dynamic being," he refers to Hegel's "double face" (p. 61). Indirect evidence for this is found in Schmitt's later use of the phrase: "Ethical or moral pathos and materialist reality combine in every typical liberal manifestation and give every political concept a double face" (p. 71).

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degrades the enemy into moral and other categories and is forced to make of him a monster that must not only be defeated but also utterly destroyed."[49] As a political theorist, Schmitt neither celebrates nor bemoans war. Instead, he recognizes that it appears inevitable, and he argues that it is a distinctively political possibility, in that it can be the expression of the solidarity that binds together the various warring factions. No doubt, he would also recognize that war is not always the function of such political systems: some wars are little more than private squabbles between princes, dictators and business interests, whose servants remain as alienated and isolated in conflict as they were in peace.

If this interpretation is correct, it is not merely because people are "evil" in the sense of dangerous that the political is their destiny. It is not the threatening presence of the enemy alone that leads into the political; the enemy must threaten relations and forms of life that are sufficiently cherished by those who partake of them. It is such commitments and such solidarity that are the destiny of human beings.[50] This seems to be what Schmitt has in mind when he writes: "In the concrete reality of the political, no abstract orders or norms but always real human groupings rule over other human groupings and associations."[51] To describe these "real human groupings" or "ways of life" as relations of friendship may be misleading. As one of the criteria of the political, "friend," like "enemy," has a formal, almost technical meaning. Just as Schmitt argues that the public enemy is conceptually distinct from the private enemy, whom one hates, so is his public friend distinct from the private friend, whom one loves. This, however, does not mean that Schmitt's political friendship is the same phenomenon described by Aristotle in books eight and nine of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle's *philia* emphasizes objective qualities of character and lacks the connotations of intimacy carried by "friendship." In contrast, Schmitt's political friendship implies as little about the character of the "friend" as it does about one's feelings for him. Indeed, in stark contrast to both the Aristotelian and the popular concepts of friendship, it is not necessary that those people who share a relation of political friendship even know one another. What is essential is that there be a shared commitment to their way of life. As Schmitt makes clear, that form of life might be defined in any number of ways: "All concepts, including the concept of mind, are pluralistic and

49. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
51. *Ibid.*, pp. 72-3.

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can only be understood in terms of concrete political existence. Just as every nation has its own concept of nation and finds the constitutive characteristics of nationality within itself, so every culture and every cultural epoch has its own concept of culture. All essential concepts are not normative but existential."[52]

The existence of such a shared commitment in no way allows for the evaluation of political order in ahistorical, rationalist terms. Schmitt's concern is with the nature of the commitment to the group, not with the "objective" moral status of that group's behavior. This is not necessarily a fatal compromise. As Stuart Hampshire, hardly a nihilist, has argued, there is no reason to expect all of the necessary mores of a group to be open to rational, universal standards. "Any particular sexual morality," for instance, "is under-determined by purely rational considerations, which are everywhere valid. . . . At all times and in all places there has to be a sexual morality . . . but it does not have to be the same sexual morality."[53] The same could be said of any of the features that identify a group its members see as possessing political authority over their lives.

Here it may be objected that Hegel's distinction between a legitimate state and a gang of courageous "robbers or murderers bent on crime" is valid. If so, does Schmitt's political theory allow him to recognize it? It does in so far as it distinguishes between a loosely organized group and one in which the sovereign authority is acknowledged by the citizenry to possess "the right to demand from its members the readiness to die." Whether a group of the latter sort is made up of thieves and murderers is beside the point. No doubt, some states have been largely concerned with the pursuit of murder and thievery. Such states are deplorable. But they are states nonetheless. Schmitt is attempting to provide "a definition [of the political] in the sense of a criterion," one independent of the criteria that define the moral, aesthetic and economic spheres of human thought and action. It follows that he will acknowledge as political some forms of association that may be

52. Schmitt, "The Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations," *op. cit.*, p. 134. The context of this remark is telling. Schmitt's emphasis on "concrete political existence" might lead to the conclusion that he fails to see that communities are often defined and wars often fought over abstract issues. In fact, Schmitt makes the above claim so as to be able to evaluate the different "central spheres" that he argues have succeeded one another in defining European civilization over the past five centuries: theology, metaphysics, humanistic moralism, and the aesthetic culture of production and consumption.

53. Stuart Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 136.

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good or evil, beautiful or ugly, profitable or unprofitable.[54]

However, it is one thing to say that the internal standards of a group defy evaluation by universal rationalist standards, and quite another that the members of the group are incapable of guiding their own decisions by shared values or shared ideas of what constitutes a good reason. Schmitt commits himself to the latter as well as the former position. The first step toward this unwelcome conclusion is taken when he insists on the political irrelevance of the content of the "motives" that define any given political group. Schmitt argues that the political "is independent, not in the sense of a distinct new domain, but in that it can neither be based on any one antithesis [such as good and evil, beautiful and ugly] or any combination of other antitheses, not can it be traced to these." Further, "it would be senseless to wage war for purely religious, purely moral, purely juristic, or purely economic motives."[55] On what, then, will the solidarity of the group be based? What do they have in common if it is neither economic, aesthetic, religious, or moral? The answer is: a shared identity, the homogeneity of the group. Hence the only "sensible" justification for waging war is the self-defense of the group.[56] The homogeneity that defines the group may well have its origins in a shared religion or a shared set of moral values. But politically this content is irrelevant. This would seem to squash most public debate and deliberation. Moral, economic and even religious matters are things about which one can argue. But shared identity, if there is one, appears to be nothing more than a fact. Indeed, it

54. At times, Meier betrays an inability to accept these distinctions. He asks why Schmitt takes pains "to conceal his moral judgment, his evaluative stance, towards the political." See Meier, *op. cit.*, p. 67. This implies that evaluative stances entail moral judgments, if they can even be said to be distinct from them at all. In fact, Meier argues that Schmitt's "moral" commitment is a form of theology. But not every "evaluative stance" is a moral one. Morality deals with how one ought to live. When Schmitt suggests that the political is to be preferred over the apolitical way of life, he is claiming something about how one *ought to live*. Does it follow that this claim is a *moral* one? It does if "moral" is defined so broadly that this conclusion really fails to make the point its proponents take it to be making; and it does not if one follows Schmitt and common usage and give the term a more specific definition. If Schmitt maintains the political as a way of life more meaningful than an apolitical way of life, it follows that he has an idea of what makes life meaningful, one that, if it is to be used as a standard by which to appraise the political, must be independent of it. It would make sense to call this "ethical," in the widest sense, that of ethos, of character and habit. The problem is, if ethical is taken in this sense, it does not seem to say that the political is valued for ethical reasons, since everything is valued for ethical reasons: economics, aesthetics — even immorality itself.

55. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, *op. cit.*, pp. 26 and 36.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

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is not even that because this identity is so formalized, so thoroughly drained of content, that is nothing more than a shared commitment. Like the sovereign decision, it is neither a fact nor a norm.[57]

This does not completely preclude political deliberation. Because solidarity is based on a shared identity, there is little room for the multiplicity of perspectives required if debate is to emerge at all. But there is still the possibility to differ about the *interpretation* of political identity. In a discussion of 17th-century theories of natural law, Schmitt writes: "Public order and security manifest themselves very differently in reality, depending on whether a militaristic bureaucracy, a self-governing body controlled by the spirit of commercialism, or a radical party organization decides when there is order and security and when it is threatened."[58] This suggests that there is no distinction between the regime and the sovereign. But the basic point remains relevant: different regimes will be threatened by different things and in different ways, and these threats will not be self-evident. Consider the US, which today still has a slim claim to being "a self-governing body controlled by the spirit of commercialism." The men who led the country into war against Iraq could argue with at least some plausibility that they were "defending" the concrete way of life characterized in this way. But it was obviously open to others to deny this, and to claim that the "self governing" and "commercial" spirit in no way required this war. Such a debate can be conducted on at least two levels. On the first, it is largely a matter — in this case — of economics; on the second, it is a matter of whether something poses an "existential" threat to a political entity that merely happens to be guided by a "commercial" spirit. On this second level the debate would concern the interpretation of identity and, as such, be a purely political one.

Schmitt himself demonstrates an easy confidence in his own ability to make the required distinctions: "To demand seriously of human beings that they kill others and be prepared to die themselves so that trade and industry may flourish for the survivors or that the purchasing power of the grandchildren may grow is sinister and crazy."[59] Such a remark might well be made in a debate over "Operation Desert Storm." Here the claim might be that Americans are committed to and united in a democratic freedom that has only contingently been aligned with capitalism's interests, and that Middle-East oil is not one of this polity's vital interests. Put

57. Cf. "Definition of Sovereignty," in Schmitt, *Political Theology*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
58. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.
59. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

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this way, the reply is easy enough to imagine. On the face of it, such a debate about the nature of shared identity and the focus of mutual commitment would not seem to be in conflict with Schmitt's strictures. Nonetheless, he does not permit for political decisions to involve public debate and deliberation, even of the minimal sort his theory will allow. In his constitutional theory, the populace is accorded the right to evaluate the performance of the state only in the form of acts of acclamation.

This limitation is a result of Schmitt's decisionism. Schmitt understands the political decision as an alternative to the law — one necessitated by the law's own limitations. The rationality that characterizes the normal situation is, in his eyes, that of a norm or law governing that situation. In its absence, there is no indication, in Schmitt's texts of the 1920s, of any rational guidance whatsoever.[60] This is why Schmitt has no faith in public debate. If the only rational guidance that can be found is that of a norm, and if that will not apply in the case of an exception, it is plain that open debate will serve no purpose but that of undermining authority. Schmitt is quite frank about this: "The decision becomes instantly independent of argumentative substantiation and receives an autonomous value."[61] In the end: "The exception in jurisprudence is analogous to the miracle in theology."[62]

The relevant point here is that this characterization of the irrationality or arationality of the political decision is not necessarily connected with Schmitt's characterization of the nature of political community. Schmitt's version of identity politics is largely derived from his reading of Rousseau. As he emphasizes again and again, according to this model, democracy is not a matter of popular participation, revocable consent, or liberal/parliamentary institutions; instead, it is a question of the identity of the ruler and the ruled.[63] Such identity is not at all irreconcilable with a form

60. He does suggest that the English have attained a degree of homogeneity of values and manners that circumvents law to some extent. But he hardly adopts the English as a model for other political communities.

61. Schmitt, "The Problem of Sovereignty," *op. cit.*, p. 31. Schmitt makes this comment in a discussion of the "moment of competence," in which authority is assumed to make the decision without the guidance of the rule that authority will apply. He also specifies that this happens "in certain circumstances"; but he then goes on to say that "there can never be absolutely declaratory decisions." What is decisive is the entire absence of non-normative or legal reasons for deciding one way or another here and throughout *Political Theology*. While one might attribute this to the book's emphasis on law, the examples of legal theorists from H. L. A. Hart to Stanley Fish demonstrate that discussions of law are by no means compelled to exclude discussions of non-legally determined judgment.

62. See Schmitt, "Political Theology," in *Political Theology*, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

63. See the first chapter and the preface to the second edition of *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*.

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of dictatorship that denies to the populace the right to debate political issues.[64] This much is clear in Rousseau's own infamous references to the possibility of forcing the citizenry to be free when they misunderstand their own (general) will. But it does not *necessitate* dictatorship. As *The Social Contract* again makes clear, a Rousseauian polity that rests on the homogeneity of the commitments of its members is compatible with a variety of political structures and institutions.[65]

If the proper interpretation of *The Concept of the Political* has been established here, this hardly neutralizes Schmitt because, like Heidegger, Schmitt did not always appreciate his own best insights. The fact that he put his theoretical system in the service of the Nazis should draw attention to the disturbing, if conceptually necessary, lack of content he gives the political form of life. Many detect anti-Semitism in Schmitt's references to the political enemy as "alien and . . . of a different type.[66] Others disagree (though Schmitt is blatantly and offensively anti-Semitic in some of the writings he produced under the Nazis). But there is certainly no reason why a political form of life could not revolve around such bigotry. Indeed, Schmitt's own attempt to stave off nihilism is clearly compatible with the nihilistic frenzy tearing apart regions like the former Yugoslavia, where ethnic solidarity is rife.

No doubt, this interpretation shifts the grounds of the debate on Schmitt in an important way. Too many of Schmitt's critics take him to task for war-mongering. If this were true, it would make him an easy target.

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64. In his eagerness to vilify Schmitt, William Scheuerman argues that Schmitt "refers to Rousseau, but he strips Rousseau of any of his more defensible features." As an instance of these features, Scheuerman argues that, "insofar as Rousseau's reliance on the metaphor of the social contract is based on the picture of an agreement between individuals who first enter into it, it still is predicated on some degree of political pluralism." See Scheuerman, *Between the Norm and the Exception*, *op. cit.*, p. 23. The objection, however, is poorly taken. Not only does Schmitt acknowledge this ambiguity in Rousseau (See Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, *op. cit.*, p. 13), but he is right to resolve the ambiguity as he does. Rousseau distinguishes himself from, say, Locke, in his use of the concept of the General Will. If the members of a Rousseauian political/moral community did not share the same identity — the same (general) will — it would be incomprehensible how one of them could "force" another one to be free. How such a shared identity might be the product of "an agreement of individuals who first must enter into" a contract is wholly unclear. Rousseau's "picture" of a social contract is not simply rhetorical, but neither is it a self-evident, common-sensical concept.

65. See, in particular, the third book. Schmitt acknowledges this on *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, *op. cit.*, p. 25, but his own political thought moves decisively away from this openness.

66. See, for example, Meier, *op. cit.*, p. 7, note 5.

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It is far more uncomfortable to recognize his close relation to the currently fashionable identity politics. The assertion of identity need not follow from nor lead to a violent conflict. Schmitt is quite right when he insists that "[w]ar is neither the aim nor the purpose nor even the content of politics." But it would be naive or disingenuous to maintain that a politics that defines itself in terms of a shared identity did not raise this and other dangers. As Schmitt rather chillingly puts it: "[D]emocracy requires . . . first homogeneity and second — if need arises — elimination or eradication of heterogeneity."[67]

If this suggests that the essentially Aristotelian/Platonic appeal to the primacy of the political whole over the political part is problematic, Schmitt's work suggests similar limitations to the appeal to the whole in terms of the individual's own life. Throughout his work, Schmitt is centrally concerned with commitment. To commit oneself to a political authority that can then make decisions concerning one's life and death is, in a sense, an absolute commitment. It does not allow for the whimsical changes of mind Schmitt associates with romanticism and aestheticism. But, in itself, this hardly seems to justify the close connection Schmitt establishes between mortality, authority and meaning. If the point is to give meaning to life — and not, like Aristotle, to ensure that death be *kalos* — why bother with death at all? Surely some other "absolute" form of commitment is possible, say, marriage without the possibility of divorce, or the bearing of children whom one will "absolutely" refuse to abandon or disown. Schmitt's utter disregard of such banal alternatives suggests that the commitment required involves a life in its entirety. Schmitt here appears to be working on precisely the same principle that defines his concept of the political: the part finds meaning only in assuming its rightful place within the whole. Just as the individual becomes the person he truly is by transcending his physical life in his solidarity with the community, so too the discrete relations and commitments of his individual life take on their true meaning when they form a whole. Only death confronts life as a whole.

The appeal and the danger of Schmitt's political thinking largely derive from his twofold insistence on the primacy of the whole. Only if

67. Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, *op. cit.*, p. 11. On the following pages he asks, in rhetorical illustration of this principle, "Does the British Empire rest on universal and equal voting rights for all of its inhabitants?" His answer is, "It could not survive for a week on this foundation; with their terrible majority, the coloreds would dominate the whites. In spite of that the British Empire is a democracy."

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politics and experience can be imagined in a new way — one that does not revolve around the attempt to regain unity and totality — will it be possible to move beyond Schmitt's concept of the political. Liberalism, of course, tries to do this. But the mere assertion of liberal principles to those who seek something else from politics is clearly futile.[68] Whether one finds Schmitt acceptable or not, it is undeniable that his concept of the political continues to apply today. If it is to be set aside, it should be done with a clear awareness of the needs it promises to fulfill. For it is simply not true that every Nazi or Stalinist was an evil, stupid, or morally retarded human being. As disturbing as it sounds, it follows from this that there were what appeared to be good reasons to believe that legitimate needs could be met by such movements. Until those needs are understood, it is difficult to meet them in other ways and to resist those movements that promise to meet them. As Jean-Luc Nancy and Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe[69] note: "It is not possible to push [Nazism] aside as an aberration, still less as a past aberration. A comfortable security in the certitudes of morality and of democracy not only guarantees nothing, but exposes one to the risk of not seeing the arrival, or the return, of that whose possibility is not due to any simple accident of history."*

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68. John Rawls, the exemplary contemporary liberal, begins his *Theory of Justice* by arguing that utilitarianism is a wrong-headed approach to moral theory because it improperly generalizes from what is rational in the case of a single individual to what is rational in the case of many persons. While it might be rational for a single person to sacrifice a present pleasure to achieve a later, greater pleasure, it is never rational for a group to sacrifice the pleasure of one of its members to achieve the greater pleasure of others. Rawls understands the violation of his principle entirely in Kantian terms, as the use of one person as a means by others. But reading Schmitt demonstrates that some at least will understand this in radically different ways. Reading Rawls will hardly change their minds.

69. They continue: "An analysis of Nazism should never be conceived as a dossier of simple accusation, but as one element in a general deconstruction of the history in which our own provenance lies." See Jean-Luc Nancy and Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe, "The Nazi Myth," tr. by Brian Holmes, in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 16, no. 2 (Winter 1990), p. 312.

* Kateri Carmola, Ron Polansky, Tom Rockmore, Hans Sluga, Eric Wilson and John P. McCormick provided critical and helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article.

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Baudrillard's Nihilism and the End of Theory

Anthony King

The key question today is how to maintain a "critical" position in the face of dramatic global transformations which seem to absorb all opposition. The failure of 1968, the decomposition of the working class and their unions, the collapse of Soviet Communism in 1989 and the growing acceptance of neo-liberal thinking makes the end of this millennium a difficult time to be radical. This may not be the end of history as Fukuyama claimed, but it threatens to be the end of critique. Within this new context, radical intellectuals are now unsure of where the battle-lines are or even what kind of war they should be fighting. Yet Critical Theory has never been more necessary, for the very reason that all opposition seems to be incorporated into the system. It is now, with the apparent collapse of critique, that the curious case of Jean Baudrillard becomes relevant. Although his earlier writings rejected Marxism as not radical enough because it was always already trapped within capitalist categories, Baudrillard has been overwhelmed by the emergence of global capitalism and the demise of Marxism. In the context of this postmodern order, he has renounced all critique and, instead, opted for nihilism. Although this nihilism is extreme, it is not completely idiosyncratic[1] and, consequently, it usefully points to where Critical Theory went wrong. Baudrillard's later

1. Arthur Kroker and Debra Cook, *The Postmodern Scene* (London: Macmillan, 1988); Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1988), would be examples of this nihilism. Alex Callincos' *Against Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), Christopher Norris' *What's Wrong with Postmodernism?* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), Steven Best and Douglas Kellner's *Postmodern Theory* (London: Macmillan, 1991), and Douglas Kellner's *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991) similarly see this nihilism as widespread.

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writings demonstrate exactly what critical theorists must *not* do. His earlier writings, echoing the work of Adorno and Horkheimer, suggest ways to think against the current hegemony.

Baudrillard's Early Period: The Critique of Industrial Capitalism

Maintaining that Marx's critical project failed, because it did not go far enough, Baudrillard first sought to subvert industrial capitalism through a critique of the ideology of production, use and exchange value.[2] Despite his intentions, Marx himself uncritically employed the very concepts of labor, production and use-value which were fundamental to capitalism and therefore, supported the very order whose dissolution his writing sought. "Failing to conceive of a mode of social wealth other than that founded on labor and production, Marxism no longer furnishes in the long run a real alternative to capitalism."[3] For Marx, the problem with labor under capitalism was that it failed to live up to the definition provided by capitalism. The objective quantity of work put into commodities was disguised by the fetishism of the commodity, but Marx never questioned capitalism's claim that labor had an objective value. Rather, the problem was that capitalism obscured that objective value, so that workers earned less than their labor was objectively worth and were thus exploited. Baudrillard's key claim is that labor is never objective, but always culturally defined, and that turning labor into something with an objectively discernible economic value, which no one can dispute and which is 'fair', is already a crucial step in the establishment of capitalist hegemony. Critical Theory must go beyond Marx to see that claims to material objectivity are themselves part of capitalist hegemony. Once the objective productivity of labor is accepted, Critical Theory has already lost most of its theoretical leverage, conceding as obvious one of the central mechanisms by which the order is established and legitimated. Conceding that the value of labor is objective means that it is beyond political negotiation. Consequently, the objectivity of labor is a central element in capitalism's disarticulation of economics from politics.

Writing over a century later, Baudrillard was able to see beyond these

2. Baudrillard's early period refers both to the period from the late 1960s to about the mid-1970s and includes his first four books *Les Système des Object* (Paris: Denoel, 1968); *La Societé de Consommation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970); *Pour une Critique de l'Economie Politique du Signe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972); and *Le Miroir de la Production* (Tournail: Casterman, 1973).

3. Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production*, tr. by Mark Poster (St.Louis: Telos Press, 1975), p. 29.

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concepts. In place of Marxist categories of use and exchange value, labor, production and alienation, he deployed anthropological accounts of primitive societies as a resource for the radical critique of capitalism. In particular, he employed notions of sacrifice, symbolic exchange, duel, gift, ambiguity, challenge and reversibility. In contrast to the economic categories of capitalism, and despite capitalism's claims of naturalism and inevitability, he emphasized symbolic exchanges found in gift exchange in primitive cultures as the real universal economic categories.

In contrasting the exchange systems of other cultures with capitalism, Baudrillard drew on the anthropological tradition and, in particular, the writings of Mauss[4] and Sahlins[5] concerning the gift. He highlights the gift economy in contrast to capitalism because, in the gift economy, exchanges are always symbolic and, from this, he concludes that there are, in fact, no objective systems of production and exchange but all systems of production are always symbolic. As Georges Bataille argued, there is no such thing as an economy of necessity — there is always surplus, the extent and nature of which is the result of socio-political arrangements. In addition, the symbolism of exchange means that it always represents the individual and his relations. Furthermore, in non-capitalist cultures, the gift is always a challenge which threatens the subordination of the receiver if the receiver cannot reciprocate. Therefore, the gift is always ambiguous. By contrast, in capitalist political economy, the meaningfulness of the gift (which is an expression of personal relations and contains both elements of friendship and challenge) is reduced to generality. "*All ambivalence is reduced by equivalence.*"[6] In place of that equivalence, Baudrillard demands the return to a symbolic economy, which allows the possibility of individualistic relations.

The anthropology of the gift provides Baudrillard with a powerful critical perspective on capitalism, because it enables him to turn capitalism's claim for the universality and priority of its categories on its head. Thus he asks: "Are we always within the capitalist mode of production? If the answer is yes, then we readily accept the classical Marxist analysis. Are we within a *later* mode, so different in its structure, in its contradictions and in its mode of revolution, that one must distinguish it radically from capitalism (while maintaining that it is always a question of a mode of production

4. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, tr. by W. D. Hall (London: Routledge, 1990).
5. Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (London: Tavistock, 1974).
6. Jean Baudrillard, *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, ed. by Mark Poster (Cambridge: Polity, 1988).

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which is determinant as such)? Are we, quite simply, within a mode of production at all and *have we ever been in one*?" [7] Baudrillard's anthropological insights allow him to see that it is not that every other economic form is a capitalist mode of production in disguise and that the political economic categories of capitalism are universal, but rather that capitalism itself is a form of symbolic exchange — even if it denies its true nature. Instead of accepting capitalist concepts at face value, in these early writings Baudrillard situates them anthropologically. Through this contextualization, he reveals the inadequacy of the particular capitalist concepts to the reality they describe. They are partial, because they are politically motivated, thus the putatively impartial and obvious objectivity of labor becomes the exact opposite — a symbolic cultural achievement of a particular class in human history whose achievement is crucial to that class' hegemony.

Baudrillard and the Frankfurt School

Baudrillard's early period culminates in the radical Critical Theory of *The Mirror of Production* and, although Baudrillard does not acknowledge it, the parallels between his own critique of capitalism, the work of the Frankfurt School, and Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in particular, is striking. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno argue that the Enlightenment rejected the mimetic mythological thinking of previous cultures in favor of a scientific method.[8] The mythical thought of pre-capitalist societies represented the variety of nature with a pantheon of idols and gods, each of which symbolized one aspect of the natural world. These representations were obviously inadequate, inevitably excluding important aspects of their object. By contrast, science rejects representation and meaning and looks to the object as an example of statistical laws; as mere examples of a universal and, therefore as eminently interchangeable. Yet, although science demands that it has put an end to mythological and mimetic thought, Horkheimer and Adorno argue that science's rejection of mythology is deluded. All thinking is finally mythological because thinking is always conceptual and all concepts have to represent their object. Furthermore, since concepts are mimetic, they are always inadequate to their object. There are always features which escape representation. The inescapable inadequacy of concepts to the reality they describe is the central theme of

7. Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production*, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

8. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, tr. by John Cumming (London: Allen Lane, 1973), p. 5

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Adorno's entire philosophy and is discussed at length in his *Negative Dialectics*.[9] Consequently, critical social theorists develop their position through a continual consideration of the gap between the concept and the object, and this eternal consideration transforms both object and concept in an upward dialectical spiral of increasing self-consciousness. The object is never known immediately, but only through the mediation of concepts. Thus, for Adorno, "dialectics is the consistent sense of nonidentity. It does not begin by taking a standpoint."[10] Rather, dialectics or Critical Theory is only the negative process of deconstructing what is being thought. Of course, as Adorno recognized, in the end, something positive has to be reached and some standpoint adopted if anything is to be said at all, but this should only be at the end of a long process, fully conscious of the fact that this standpoint is inevitably insufficient and temporary. By contrast, scientific thinking rejects the inadequacy of the concept and demands direct access to nature. This demand for direct access is mystified, because that knowledge of nature is always mediated by concepts and, in the end, scientific thought is merely a form of mythological thought, but one which dare not speak its name.

The resemblance between Baudrillard's early writings and *Dialectic of Enlightenment* emerges with particular clarity when Horkheimer and Adorno connect scientific thought with the bourgeois capitalist economy. "With the extension of the bourgeois commodity economy, the dark horizon of myth is illumined by the sun of calculating reason, beneath whose cold rays the seed of the new barbarism grows to fruition."[11] This new barbarism is the reduction of all individuals and all individual exchanges to dead equivalence. Like the rabbits of scientific experiment, the individual in the market is a mere example of a general statistical law. As Baudrillard argues, not only is the reduction of individual exchange to a universal formula tyrannous, stifling self-expression and development, but like science, it is an illusion. "The dismissal of sacrifice by the rationality of self-preservation is exchange no less than sacrifice itself was. The identically persistent self which arises in the abrogation of sacrifice immediately becomes an unyielding, rigidified sacrificial ritual that man celebrates upon himself by opposing his consciousness to the natural

9. His introductory claim to that book can be taken as an aphorism for his entire critical method: "The name of dialectics says no more, to begin with, than that objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder" Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, tr. by E. B. Ashton (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1990), p. 5.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Horkheimer and Adorno, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

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context."[12] Paralleling science, political economy insists that it has eliminated the spirit of the gift and washed economic exchange of any individuality. In fact, all exchanges necessarily involve the embodiment of the giver but, within the capitalist economy, giver and receiver are reduced to enslaved, undeveloping selves.

Despite Baudrillard's failure to refer to Horkheimer and Adorno's work, his early efforts follow a similar path. Like Horkheimer and Adorno, he criticizes capitalist categories from the viewpoint of mythological cultures. Capitalism is only one form of symbolic exchange, but one whose categories deny this symbolism, insisting on an apolitical and materialist objectivism. The dismissal of capitalism's claims to be different, through a consideration of other cultures, strips away capitalism's aura of objectivity, undermining the explicitly political interests which are invested in the capitalist order but are disguised by appeals to universality and objectivity.

Global Capitalism and Hyperreality

Confronted with the emergence of global capitalism, Baudrillard trades his Critical Theory in for nihilism, because he sees this postmodern capitalism as a fundamental cultural transformation. Unlike his earlier work, where capitalism was seen to be just another form of symbolic exchange, he now begins to believe global capitalism's own self-definition. He no longer situates this form of capitalism within a historical context, but absolutizes it. He sees the emergence of hyperreality, the implosion of external reality into a series of images, as the defining feature of this transformation. "The real does not efface itself in favor of the imaginary; it effaces itself in favor of the more real than real: the hyperreal. The truer than true: this is simulation."[13]

Hyperreality emerges when culture no longer refers to a social reality. Hyperreal culture is not grounded in a reality beyond itself; images float free from any verifying reference, becoming an un-anchored "reality." The signifier and signified become detached, and the signifier effaces the signified. Hyperreality marks the end of representation, because representation becomes reality and, in this, differs profoundly from any previous culture. Baudrillard's early writing already distinguished capitalism's self-definition from the symbolic exchanges of "primitive society." In these societies, symbolic exchanges occur in sacrifice or in gifts, which

12. Horkheimer and Adorno, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

13. Jean Baudrillard, *Fatal Strategies*, tr. by Philip Beitchman and W. G. J. Neislu-chowksi (New York: Semiotext(e), 1990), p. 11.

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are images of the reality they represent. In modern capitalism, this symbolism is stultified and exchanges are no longer mythically representative but rather merely mirror the objective value of what is to be exchanged. Despite the self-denials, there is an impoverished form of representation, where that representation is deadened into mere equivalence. In order to communicate this stultified representationalism of modern capitalism, Baudrillard talks of maps, doubles and mirrors, where the signifier and signified become exactly equivalent with no room for difference.

With global capitalism, a radical transformation occurs in which there is no longer any representation. The representation effaces the reality and the representation is all that remains. In place of the dull and equivalent exchange and use values of the modern period, the signifiers of postmodernity signify nothing but themselves. According to Baudrillard, this hyperreal culture is generated by television, for the images on the television screen do not have any external referents, even deadened ones. In order to describe this new hyperreal culture, Baudrillard develops an idiosyncratic lexicon of terms, which stand as metaphors for this new televisual culture.[14] For him, the word "scene" refers to the period of modern (mirror-stage) capitalism when representations are still linked to reality. Consequently, the scene can be interpreted. It can be compared to something else in order to point out its inadequacies. The screen replaces this scene and brings about the end of interpretation.[15] It is automatically decoded in the receiver's mind without any mediation. The process of reading, interpretation and internalization is abolished, and the viewer receives an unmediated message just as the pianola plays music

14. He writes: "For information and the media are not a scene, a prospective space, or something that's performed, but a screen without depth, a tape perforated with messages and signals to which corresponds a receiver's own perforated reading." *Ibid.* p. 65.

15. Alongside the term "screen," Baudrillard deploys a whole series of words which refer to this same hyperreal phenomenon of the obliteration of the signified by the signifier. Thus, hyperreality is termed "obscene" or "obese" because it is no longer a scene but is bloated on itself. It is described as a "simulation" or "simulacrum," because these bloated images are so real and vivid, or Baudrillard refers to it as "metastasis," "code," "clone," "matrix," "hologram" or "moebius strip," because these images are utterly self-referential, reproducing themselves exactly, untroubled by external referents. Since external reality is obliterated beyond "realer than real" images, the television is free to represent the world in whatever way it chooses and no one is capable of subverting that absolute domination because no one any longer has access to the real world as a reference point. Thus, although, Baudrillard reneges upon his early connection with the Frankfurt School, his bleak political vision of hyperreal culture accords closely with the pessimism of Adorno and Horkheimer's writing for, in both, political cooption is all but universal while personal autonomy, self-development and, therefore, freedom are all but extinguished.

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automatically without the active participation of the pianist. Today's world is one of vivid representations which, however, have nothing beyond them.

Baudrillard's Terrorism

In the light of hyperreality and our increasing domination by free-floating images, traditional forms of critique have become obsolete. Dialectical critique demonstrates the deliberate and politically motivated inadequacy of the concepts of dominant groups by pointing out the gap between the way those concepts represent social reality and the nature of that social reality, even though that social reality is itself never finally objective but always constructed. In the context of hyperreality, however, there is allegedly no social reality — even a constructed one — in which to situate hegemonic concepts and demonstrate their inadequacy. Fragmented images of the television screen, uncoupled from social reality, have become "realer than real." There is no context outside the screen or, as Baudrillard would say, there is no scene, but only obscene images.

Since critical analysis operates by means of interpretation, at one stage removed from social reality, Critical Theory assists in the emergence of hyperreality. Academic theories are mere interpretations of a hyperreality already separated from social reality. Thus they themselves become simulacra, doubly removed from life. In the attempt to justify themselves, academic theories do not render their explanations more convincing but lose sight of the very object of study. "The frenzy to explain everything, attribute everything, footnote everything. All this becomes a fantastic encumbrance — the references all living off each other and at each other's expense. An excrescent system of interpretation develops with no relations to its object. All this comes from a headlong flight forward from the hemorrhage of objective causality."[16] Thus, the academy compounds the problem. Academia becomes self-referential through its need for theoretical validation and, consequently, the object (hyperreality) disappears from view. Dialectical critique never even starts to confront hyperreality but only adds to it.

As a result, Baudrillard turns his back on Critical Theory, insisting that "the dialectical stage, the critical stage is empty."[17] A new method of resistance must be developed, which Baudrillard calls "terrorism" and by which he seems to mean violent political action and the taking

16. Baudrillard, *Fatal Strategies*, *op. cit.*, p.12-13.

17. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, tr. by Sheila Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1994), p. 161

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up of arms against a sea of simulacrum. Academics, however, can wage a more sedate form of terror. "I am a terrorist and nihilist in theory as the others are with their weapons. Theoretical violence, not truth, is the only resource left us."[18] In calling for terrorism, Baudrillard begins his aphoristic and anti-academic phase. Bryan Turner has defended this strategy and has argued that Baudrillard's difficult and fragmentary style is designed not to analyze contemporary society in a usual academic manner, but rather to communicate an understanding of that society through textual imitation.[19] "Baudrillard can be admired and praised for capturing this postmodern experience of flaneurism through the production of sociological fiction. . . . The disorder of the maxims thus provide a perfect simulation of the disorder of society."[20]

Like the simulacra Baudrillard describes, these texts have no apparent reference point, but leap from subject to subject (as viewers jump from channel to channel) and are mutually inconsistent, even incoherent. These writings are "terroristic," because they force readers to experience the stifling incoherence of a culture of simulacra. They terrorize them, forcing them to acknowledge the true nature of their culture. Through the infuriating bewilderment the later texts cause them, those readers will be driven to oppose hyperreality itself. If Baudrillard is still serious about his own political radicalness and the subversiveness of his texts, then this is the objective he pursues in his later writings.[21]

In the context of hyperreality, theory must no longer try to represent the object it seeks to explain and critique. That is the failure of both Foucault and Deleuze, whom Baudrillard criticizes for sustaining a traditional notion of reality. Theory must become its own reality by cutting itself off from external reality, from "its term," and making itself dizzy by turning

18. *Ibid.* p. 163.

19. Bryan Turner, 'Cruising America' in *Forget Baudrillard*? ed. by Chris Rojek, Chris and Bryan Turner (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 154.

20. *Ibid*, pp. 154 and 157.

21. In an interview with Baudrillard, Sylvére Lotringer sums up the objective of "hyperreal" theory. "SL: 'You've cut yourself off from every system of reference, but not from referentiality. What I see you describing is not a challenge to the real but a challenge internal to theory. You don't criticize the genealogical attitude or libidinal position, you send them spinning away like tops. You wholly embrace the movement that animates them, you amplify their concepts to the maximum, pulling them into the vortex of your own dizziness. You draw them into an endless spiral which, like the treatment of myth by Levi-Strauss, leads them bit by bit to their own exhaustion.' JB: 'That's right. Thus theory is exterminated. It no longer has any term, literally. You can't find an end for it anymore'." Jean Baudrillard, *Forget Foucault*, tr. by Nicole Dufresne, Philip Beitchman, Lee Hildreth and Mark Polizzotti (New York: Semiotext(e), 1987), p. 131-2.

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in on itself (just like hyperreality). It can no longer be interpretative, explanatory or representative as it was before hyperreality. "From that point on, theory maintains absolutely no relation with anything at all; it becomes an event in and of itself."[22] Once theory becomes deliberately and consciously self-referential and autonomous, just as television images are separated from the reality which they have taken over, it becomes a useful critical tool again. In dismissing reality, theory graphically communicates to the reader a feeling of a void and thereby the dizziness which is induced by hyperreality.[23] In performing this un-mediated communication of hyperreality, theory becomes "suicidal, but in a good way."[24] It turns on itself, but in self-destructing like a kamikaze, it aims to sink the titanic hulk of post-Fordist hyperreality. The meaning of Baudrillard's initially obscure demand for the revenge of the object ("crystal revenge," as he sometimes calls it) becomes clear in the light of the role he assigns to theory. Its attempt to communicate the hyperreal immediately can be described as a return to and the revenge of the object itself. "The pure object is sovereign because it is what breaks up the sovereignty of the other and catches it in its own trap. The crystal takes revenge."[25]

In communicating hyperreality directly, Baudrillard's later writings seek to pass the traditional sovereignty of the subject over to the object. Like hyperreality, the crystal is transparent, but it is impossible to see anything through it. It merely refracts light, so that in examining it one does not see a reality beyond it, as if it were a pane of glass, but only images of the different edges of the crystal reflected by itself. The notion of "crystal revenge" is, then, a shibboleth for all of Baudrillard's later writings, wherein he seeks to obviate the failings of traditional critique in order to communicate hyperreality directly. He wants to allow this crystalline object to speak for itself, since any subjective intervention or interpretation merely assists the growth of this object. In a world where there is no outside, the subject is rendered powerless. Traditional critique, which seeks to undermine hegemonic ideas by demonstrating their inadequacy to the social reality they putatively describe, and which was central to Baudrillard's early writings, become irrelevant because there is no external social reality.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 127.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 128-9. "If theory — or a poem, or any other kind of writing (it's not endemic to theory) — indeed manages to implode, to constitute a concentric vortex of implosion, then there are no other effects of meaning. Theory has an immediate effect — a very material one as well — of being a void. It's not so easy to create a void."
24. *Ibid.*, p. 128
25. Baudrillard, *Fatal Strategies*, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

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The Self-delusion of Baudrillard's Terrorism

For Baudrillard's later writings to be sustainable, two conditions have to be met. First, Baudrillard's terrorism — his attempt to communicate hyperreality to the reader immediately, allowing the crystal its revenge — must be theoretically coherent and possible. Second, his description of hyperreality as a unique transformation of culture, in which an external social reality is eclipsed in the vivid representations of the screen, must be an accurate account of recent developments.

The most sympathetic reading of Baudrillard's later writings is to read them as literature, as Turner and Mike Gane do.[26] This is a legitimate strategy so long as what is produced is literature. In other words, in demanding that he is no longer writing sociology, Baudrillard is committing himself to being judged by the equally rigorous, though different standards, which are applied to creative prose. This is where he falls into difficulties, for his later writing cannot really be said to be creative prose. They retain their academic form and still seek to provide a commentary on hyperreality. They do not open up a fragmented world, but rather stand back from that world, offering detached criticisms and generalizations about it. Baudrillard does not communicate the vertiginous flicking from one television channel to the other, but comments on the meaning of these changing images.

Like the academic he remains, Baudrillard makes claims about the general features of this culture, rather than using narrative to communicate a message, as is typical in literature. Moreover, there is no divide between Baudrillard and the narrative itself; there is no ironic use of character or detachment from the text. His writing is merely an earnest but stripped form of academic writing, which moves from *asserted* claim to claim, rather than from *sustained* claim to claim for the slow but rigorous building of an argument.[27] Once his obscure lexicon is deciphered, and readers realize that by "code" and "matrix" Baudrillard refers to the fact that hyperreal culture simply lives off itself, never coupling with a reality beyond itself, then his sentences become assertive and static. The only point he makes is

26. See Mike Gane, *Baudrillard. Critical and Fatal Theory* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 179-181. Unlike academic writing, this literature does not stand back from its subject but draws the reader imaginarily into the world it describes through the creation of a text which echoes that world.

27. Typically, he comments on rather than describes hyperreal culture: "The Father and the Mother have disappeared, not in the service of aleatory liberty of the subject, but in the service of a matrix called code. No more mother, no more father: a matrix. And it is the matrix, that of genetic code, that now infinitely 'gives birth' based on a functional mode purged of all aleatory sexuality. The subject is also gone, since identical duplication puts an end to this division." See Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-7.

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that television culture is hyperreal — signifiers now float free — and the only way in which this sentence communicates that point is by positing these crude metaphors of "code" and "matrix." Stylistically, Baudrillard's terrorism baldly states that contemporary culture is like a hologram, a code, a matrix or clone, because it is wholly self-referential but it does not actually communicate what it is like to experience this culture.

Compare this style of writing with J. G. Ballard's *Crash* — a novel providing a very successful (and deliberately obscene) description of postmodern culture. It recognizes that culture's bodily indulgence, and knows that it does not liberate the individual but reduces the body to a machine for pleasure, just as the car is a machine for speech. The car-crash and the sex-act are the moments when the wholly technical machineries of the car and the bodies are decomposed in an instant of pain that is transformed (for ironic effect) into one of intense pleasure for the perverts who populate the book. In communicating this new, debased ethic of bodily pleasure, where the delight in bodily mutilation parallels a correlating spiritual disfigurement, Ballard describes a questionnaire about car crashes which Vaughan, the central figure in the book, has prepared and which lists every conceivable injury: "Lastly came that group of injuries which had clearly most preoccupied Vaughan — genital wounds caused during automobile accidents. . . . the breasts of teenage girls deformed by instrument binnacles, the partial mammoplasties of elderly housewives carried out by chromium louvres of windshield assemblies, nipples sectioned by manufacturers' dashboard medallions; injuries to male and female genitalia caused by steering wheel shrouds, windshields during ejection, crushed door pillars, seat springs and handbrake units, cassette player instrument toggles."[28] The descriptions Ballard provides of both cars and bodies are wholly technical and anatomical, emphasizing that, in this culture, both "bodyworks" are (obscenely) reduced to the same level. Against Ballard's rich, self-developing text, Baudrillard's writing is flat and strained. He simply breaks down his academic text into aphoristic gobblets and draws on a

28. J. G. Ballard, *Crash* (London: Vintage, 1995), pp. 133-4. *Crash* is used deliberately, since Baudrillard himself has referred to it as providing a commentary on postmodern culture. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-19. The most effective use of this stylistic technique in this passage is Ballard's use of the phrase "windshield during ejection," where the image of sexual orgasm and the lethal propulsion of passengers out of the car are superimposed. In addition, since the extensive listing of different types of injury reduces the meaning of each, Ballard is ironically able to mount a critique of a culture which sees no value in anything beyond the technical operation of sexual excitement and ejaculation, which is equivalent to a "windshield ejection."

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lexicon of dead, static metaphors. In the end, Baudrillard falls between the two stools of demanding that academic writing is inadequate to the analysis of hyperreality, but still writing according to its conventions and thereby vitiating either the academic or the literary merit of his later work. However, even if Baudrillard wanted his later writing to be read as literature and even if he had been successful in producing text which could be judged as literature, the project of this later writing would still have been irretrievably self-deluded. Even if his terrorism were a successful form of literature, it could never (as he claims) communicate hyperreality to the reader directly, for all writing is necessarily mediated; all writing is an interpretation.[29] Unavoidably, his terroristic writing is an interpretation of hyperreal culture, which does not obviate the necessity of interpretation, however directly it tries to communicate hyperreality.

In insisting on representing hyperreality directly, Baudrillard does not, as he claims, present a clearer idea of hyperreality but, on the contrary (and ironically), a less illuminating and less direct one. As a result of his demand to present hyperreality directly, he simply stops at the first point of the interpretive process and presents his initial assumptions as the definitive statement on contemporary culture. Thus, he does not provide a clearer insight into the true nature of televisual culture but rather obscures the role of television with an assertive and arrogant hypostatization of an immediate concept. His terrorism halts the dialectical process at its first and most inadequate initial point, before the critical process has begun. Instead of developing his concepts through a thorough immersion in "hyperreal" culture, refining his interpretation to make it more adequate to that object, Baudrillard reifies his first impressions into absolute truths. In breaking off the dialectical engagement with the actual social practices of postmodern culture, he hypostatizes his crude standpoint into "the truth."

Ironically, in trying to present hyperreality immediately, Baudrillard falls into exactly the same error for which he so effectively criticized Marx. Just as Marx failed to provide a truly radical alternative to capitalism by employing the concepts of capitalist political economy, Baudrillard's

29. Baudrillard's demand that his later writings achieve the impossible feat of becoming non-textual text cannot be met and, in the end, replicates the same error as Artaud's failed "theater of cruelty." Artaud rejected classical bourgeois theater, which sought only to represent real life, because it thereby lost its critical power over that life. With his "theater of cruelty," Artaud insisted on going directly to the life he sought to communicate: "Restored to its absolute and terrifying proximity, the stage of cruelty will thus return me to the autarchic immediacy of my birth, my body and my speech." Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, translated by Alan Bass (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1990), p.190.

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fragmented aphorisms are unable to provide a critical alternative to hyperreality, because they are so thoroughly embedded inand dependent on the very cultural forms they are intended to oppose. The fragmentation of Baudrillard's later writing does not serve the critical purpose for which it was intended, but rather, if it has any effect, it sensitizes the reader to the global media culture Baudrillard wanted to resist. His attempt to portray a culture in which allegedly there is no longer any reality beyond its representations, is the academic extension of that culture. Contrary to his own intentions, it is the very intellectual path he has insisted on taking, which turns its back on careful research and close critical analysis, which makes the desert of hyperreality grow. It robs the reader of any critical understanding of contemporary culture. Moreover, it denies the importance of developing alternative knowledge and understandings, which would undermine media representations of the world because it asserts that these alternative visions would always already be incorporated into hyperreality. It is not enough simply to say that television is a false reality; one must try and reconstruct a reality in which political freedom and critique are possible, even though any constructed reality must itself always be subjected to critique. Consequently, against Baudrillard, an appropriate form of academic resistance would be to insist upon even more rigorously researched and detailed work.[30] In particular, the dialectical method which demands the constant overhaul of concepts, whereby nothing is taken for granted, would have prevented Baudrillard from falling into the hyperbolic reification of mere assertions.

The Fictitiousness of Hyperreality

In severing the dialectical process of interpretation at its first and most assertive point and in raising his most cursory impressions of television culture to a definitive analysis of that culture, Baudrillard seriously misrepresents the transformations which have occurred over the last three decades. Baudrillard's notion of hyperreality cannot be defended as an account of recent cultural transformations, although he is undoubtedly correct to point to the importance of television as a central element in contemporary culture. It is a startling development that in the last thirty years, practically everyone in the West is able to see footage of events from almost anywhere, and this footage is invariably misleading, even though it is apparently so compelling and "realistic." However, Baudrillard is wrong

30. Mike Featherstone calls for precisely this in "In Pursuit of the Postmodern: an Introduction," in *Theory, Culture and Society* 5, Nos. 2-3 (1988), p. 207.

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to leap to the conclusion that reality is obliterated by the television screen.

Television does not create an entirely false reality either in its representation of the world or with its reception by viewers. Television coverage is informed by the understandings and interpretations of the society to which it broadcasts and by those who work in it. Thus, any footage is an interpretation of the world according to a particular culture and, consequently, it is necessarily limited. Programmers try to render this interpretation of the world as compelling as possible to attract viewers and to sustain their claims, but those images are always and necessarily "social"; they are the historical products of a particular culture. Then the images are not free-floating, mere simulacra but, on the contrary, concrete moves in a cultural practice. They refer not so much to the reality of the situations they portray but rather to the society to which they communicate these images, and they only make sense to viewers insofar as viewers are thoroughly embedded in that culture.

Similarly, television viewers do not regard these images as empty, referenceless and fragmentary. On the contrary, just as the creation of these images is embedded in the intepretive practice of making sense of the world, so the viewers try to interpret these images to make sense of their world. Whether the program be a soap opera or news footage, viewers interpret the images according to their cultural understandings[31] — although those understandings are under constant revision in order to make sense of new information. Rather than becoming the primary and prior cultural factor in contemporary society, television is embedded in and dependent upon pre-existing and historically produced understandings. Furthermore, the footage does not exist above and beyond the lives of viewers but, as the briefest autobiographical consideration will reveal, television is employed as a resource, wherein new interpretations derived from its footage are used in the renegotiation of social relations. Viewers discuss what they watch and use what they see to make sense of their own lives.

In the end, Baudrillard's discussion of hyperreality degenerates into technological determinism. As Raymond Williams has argued, technical development always presupposes a social and political context in which innovative technology is regarded as useful by particular groups, given their self-understandings. Consequently, the development and use of

31. See, for instance, John Fiske and John Hartley, *Reading Television* (London: Methuen, 1984); Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding," in Stuart Hall, ed., *Culture, Media and Language* (London: Hutchinson, 1980); Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (London: Sage, 1991), pp. 5 and 11.

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any technology must always be analyzed in terms of the political realities which gave rise to it and in which it remains embedded. From this opposition to technological determinism, Williams develops a critique of cultural pessimism because, for him, the belief in technological autonomy must lead critics into political quietism and pessimism. If technology determines social development and emerges independently, then political resistance is futile. In line with his claim that any technical development is always embedded in and employed in a social context, Williams rejects this cultural and political pessimism by arguing that, since technology is always social, it cannot only be resisted but, more importantly, it is always potentially open to creative usage by opposition groups.[32]

Williams' insistence on the cultural embeddedness of television and opposition to technological determinism has important implications for Critical Theory in the postmodern era, and allows a re-application of Baudrillard's early critique of capitalism to this later post-Fordist period. Just as Baudrillard argued that the notion of the objectivity of labor was a central political principle for the development of capitalism, because it seemed to render the market system indisputable, so is the apparently unstoppable development of brilliant new forms of technology in post-Fordist society employed to legitimate the contemporary political economic order and obviate political discontent and debate. The fantastic development of new technologies seems to divide post-Fordist society from all other social forms, demonstrating the indisputable superiority of this society. In such an apparent technological utopia, political opposition seems to become absurd and obsolete. Yet, despite its construction as an objective, inevitable and utopian force, technology is as deeply political and cultural as any previous capitalist cultural category and, therefore, anything but inevitable and objective. Given his early writings, Baudrillard should have seen through this ideology of technology and not have been tricked into pessimism by its utopian and monolithic representation. He should have seen through the rhetoric of the objectivity of technological development, just as he saw through claims about the objectivity of the market system to see why certain groups would want to represent new forms of technology in this way.

Had he immersed himself in the actual production and consumption of new technological forms, such as television, whose practices undermine

32. Raymond Williams, *Towards 2000* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), "Culture and Technology," pp. 128-151.

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the rhetoric of technological utopian determinism, it is doubtless that he would have done so. Then, just as Baudrillard claimed that capitalism was not a new political economy but only a symbolic system of exchange which dare not speak its name, so he would have seen that televisual culture, despite its technological novelty, is an unoriginal interpretative and symbolic social practice. Since these everyday practices and constructions of social reality belie official hegemonic accounts of reality, the close analysis of them offers a route to a genuinely oppositional critical position. As Piccone has argued: "With the dogma of a monolithic modernity engendering one particular self-referential cultural model no longer encumbering critical thought, it may be possible to vindicate particularity, specificity and otherness in really existing communities of people constituting their social reality through personal interaction and direct participation in most of the decisions affecting their life."[33] This engagement with diverse popular practices is necessary if Critical Theory is to have a voice in the post-Fordist order, but, true to the spirit of early Baudrillard (and Adorno), this engagement with popular practices must never make the error sometimes detectable in cultural studies of lapsing into a facile and uncritical populism, which automatically legitimates anything these groups choose to do.[34] The popular practices with which Critical Theory should engage must themselves be subjected to critique where popular constructions of reality are themselves not assumed to be correct.

In light of the necessarily interpretive nature of supposedly hyperreal culture, Baudrillard's rejection of Critical Theory becomes unnecessary and incorrect. Instead of hypostatizing his own initial interpretation of the emergence of television as a new cultural phenomenon, Baudrillard should have taken his initial interpretation as a starting point, which would have driven him to more detailed empirical research by which his own understanding would be developed dialectically. Such concrete research would have demonstrated to him the actual way in which

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33. Paul Piccone, "From the New Left to the New Populism," in *Telos* 101 (Fall, 1994), p. 189.

34. Although their work was often expressively critical and historical, The Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural occasionally slipped into this kind of populism; see John Clarke, "The Skinheads and the Magical Recovery of Community," Tony Jefferson, "The Cultural Responses of the Teds" in *Resistance through Rituals*, ed. by Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (London: Harper Collins, 1976). More recent examples of this facile populism in contemporary cultural studies would include, *The Adoring Audience* (London: Routledge, 1992), ed. by Lisa Lewis and Gerald Fine, *Shared Fantasy* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983), Harold Jenkins, *Textual Poachers* (London: Routledge, 1992).

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individuals conceive and construct their social reality, rather than his taking at face value commonsensical and hegemonic notions of social reality.[35]

Conclusion

Baudrillard's career serves a useful and dual didactic purpose. It demonstrates the path that Critical Theory and intellectuals should not take, and points toward an effective critical stance. Consequently, although the development of Baudrillard's writing from the 1980s should be rejected, he is an important figure in reconstructing the kind of Critical Theory which might at least begin to be adequate to the emergence of a post-Fordist global order. Critical Theory cannot be a dismissive or pessimistic nihilism; it must engage with and learn from actual individuals and their social practices in order to make itself aware of wider social reality against hegemonic accounts of that reality. Being critical in the era of global capitalism requires, therefore, not taking the shibboleths of this new political-economic order seriously, but always deconstructing such assertive claims through revealing how they deliberately misrepresent social reality for explicitly political ends. The importance of Baudrillard lies in the fact that he both demonstrates the most extreme symptoms of contemporary intellectual malaise and simultaneously provides the cure for that disease. Although many other contemporary figures share the later Baudrillard's nihilism, the writing of no other individual represents both critical and pessimistic moments quite so dramatically. It is in this contradiction that the lasting importance of Baudrillard's work resides.

35. In place of hypostatized assertions, Baudrillard might have undertaken detailed studies of the production and consumption of television, similar to those carried out by, e.g., David Morley, *The Nationwide Audience* (London: British Film Institute, 1980); *Family Television* (London: Comedia, 1986).

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Ecology as a Pseudo-Religion?

Manussos Marangudakis

Since the 1960s, the Green movement has been seen as an innovative leftist phenomenon. From the times of Peter Kropotkin,[1] it has been assumed that environmental concerns belong to the Left. Recent studies, however, have shown that in the late 19th and early 20th centuries there were political ecologists associated with the radical Right.[2] Some supported National Socialism, eugenics, the mystical union of mankind and nature, and other esoteric practices. Given this historical precedent, recent leftist flirtations with ecology raise a number of moral and political questions concerning the ideological character of ecology, since the latter can take a variety of forms: sometimes rational and progressive, at other times irrational or anti-modern. In all cases, there is a problematic mixture of science with politics and morality.

This is nothing new. Since the Enlightenment, innovations in the natural sciences have invariably affected culture by introducing new ideas. Thus, 18th century positivists succeeded in developing a successful model of social engineering from physics. Paradoxically, pre-war ecologists reversed this Enlightenment project celebrating human potentials, liberation from traditions, and the domination of nature. A century later, many "naturalist" social thinkers began to stress the futility of the "liberating" project, and the dangers of industrialism and technology. Fifty years after that, the Enlightenment project was challenged once again, this time by the Left.

1. Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: a Factor of Evolution* (Boston, MA: Extending Horizons Books, 1978).

2. Janet Biehl, "Rethinking Ecofeminist Politics," *Society and Nature*, Vol. 1, No. 4, pp. 57-73; Anna Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20th Century — A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989); Raymond Dominick, *Environmental Politics* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

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"Oecology," coined by Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919), began as a scientific discipline in the 1860's. It advocated a holistic approach to biology and economics. Its claim was that in a closed, limited system of energy, any autonomous "growth" is not only unreal but deadly as well. Both holistic biology and the new economics (called "energy economics") were concerned with re-establishing the natural environment as an integral part of social life. It was a crucial turning point away from the certainties of Comte, Smith and Marx. It opened new paths and raised issues concerning nature as a resource and nature as a moral category. In terms of resources, ecology dealt with the scientific use of raw materials. As such, it was adopted by governments interested in conservation (e.g., Theodore Roosevelt's administration in the US). More intriguing was the association of ecology and morality. In the late 19th century, with the advent of industrialization, rural life was linked with physical and moral well-being. Dirty industrial cities, filled with unhealthy workers, were contraposed to rural villages, populated by healthy peasants. Ecology provided the tools for a sophisticated analysis of the ills of modernity, the promise of natural living, a new vision of social organization and moral standards.

The strongholds of ecological thought were Germany, the US and England, with the Scandinavian countries close behind. The movement's central figures in Europe were Knut Hamsun, Ernst Haeckel, Henry Williamson and, less directly, Martin Heidegger. All of them became associated with the radical Right. Hamsun, Heidegger and Williamson were all members of the Nazi parties in their respective countries, and the Monist League (Haeckel's organization, founded before he died in 1919) also became associated with Nazi politics. Although they did not generate any political movements themselves, they did exert considerable influence in Western Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. Their ideas were disseminated in literary and philosophical journals and, in the case of Haeckel, through the quasi-scientific, quasi-mystical Monist League. They are particularly interesting because they were not like any of the typical Nazi ecologists, such as Julius Langbehn, Paul Lagarde, and Ludwig Woltmann.[3] Rather, they were the least political among all ecologists, yet eventually they also gravitated toward National Socialism.

3. All three belong to the ante-bellum *volkisch* movement, which sought to formulate an all-German natural and social philosophy. They believed that eugenics and racial purity were the prerequisites for a healthy nation in a healthy natural environment. Langbehn, Lagarde, and Woltmann became the forerunners of "blood and soil" National Socialist ideology. See Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974).

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Knut Hamsun (1859-1952)

Hamsun started writing late in life. In 1920, he won the Nobel prize and his books became particularly popular in Norway, the US, England and Germany. By 1945, however, he was branded a traitor and madman, his property was confiscated, and he spent time in a clinic. This was because of his support for the Norwegian National Socialist Party. Yet, in his youth, he had been an anarchist.[4] The worldview depicted in his work was simple. On the one side was the city, commerce, industry, and cosmopolitan life; on the other, peasants in touch with their land, living the simple and self-sufficient life. The initially nihilistic view of life in *Hunger* (1890) became more optimistic in his second book, *The Wanderer* (1907), where the hero seeks to improve himself and the land around him by becoming a craftsman and learning to enjoy farming.

This transformation parallels Hamsun's personal experience. In 1911, after a painful trip to the US, he bought a remote farm in Norway, and became concerned with soil fertility and the relation between farming, people and the land. Subsequently, in *Children of the Age* (1913) and *The Village of Segelfoss* (1915), his focus shifted to the disintegration of communities: rural communities turn into industrial centers, factories replace farms, people neglect their traditional skills and become consumers, precipitating the corruption of the whole community. His solution to the problems of modernity was prefigured in *Growth of the Soil* (1917),[5] where he advocated a return to the land with as little technological assistance as possible. Here, Hamsun seemed to have found a solution not present in *The Wanderer*. Nature is seen as benevolent, if her rules are accepted. Peasants remain virtuous, because they are unaffected by the city. Everything that comes from there is infected: newspapers, civil law, small town society, banks and the "Protestant Jews" [*sic*] that control them, "sentimental feminist humanitarianism," and, above all, technological "progress."[6]

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4. Robert Ferguson, *Enigma — The Life of Knut Hamsun* (London: Hutchinson, 1987).

5. Allegedly, a simple life "washed" the crimes and confusion of modernity: "A tiller of the soil, body and soul; a worker of the land without respite. A ghost risen out of the past, to point the future, a man from the earliest days of cultivation, a settler in the wilds, nine hundred years old, and withal, a man of the day. No need of a sword in your hands, you go through life bare-headed, bare-handed, in the midst of a great kindness. Man and Nature don't bombard each other, but agree; they don't compete, but go together." See Knut Hamsun, *Growth of the Soil*, tr. by W. Worster (London: Pan Books, 1980), p. 312.

6. Alrik Gustafson, *Six Scandinavian Novelists* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), p. 284.

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Traditional communities exhibit what modern life and technology abhor: stability and continuity. Their superiority is not founded on any specific norms or on the wealth and abundance they provide their members. Rather, it is based on a stable relation with the soil.

Henry Williamson (1895-1977)

Known mostly through *Tarka the Otter* (1927), Williamson's main work deals with his traumatic war experiences, the restructuring of his own life, and his attempts to restore a family farm in England. His books emphasize rural revival and resettlement, unpolluted waters, better use of physical resources, and contact with the countryside for personal and collective regeneration. Yet, he was not a romantic. His depiction of rural life is not full of happy families living the easy life; rural problems abound. He believed that modern problems are generated by big cities, ugly suburbs, factories, finance capital and the like. He berated the "hard-faced men" allegedly responsible for WWI: bankers, politicians, diplomats. In *Flax of Dream* (1924), he has rural people providing a glimpse of a better world. His knowledge of agricultural history and economics prevented him from falling into romanticism or mysticism. He did not look at nature as a metaphysical entity, but as a source of an alternative way of life. Natural objects are nothing above themselves. They exist in the context of a particular time and place. Yet, for better or worse, they can reflect social reality.

Williamson visited Nazi Germany in 1935, when ruralism and simple peasant life were seen as ideals and as a matter of national pride. He was impressed. Back in England, he went to Norfolk, bought the worst piece of land he could find, and spent the next nine years restoring and farming it organically. The whole project, which included starting a family, was to articulate, in a microcosm, the rebirth of Waste-Land Europe. Such a rebirth involved a rejection of cities and the world of egoistic town-dwellers in favor of rural life and social co-operation in a natural environment. People and animals follow the same laws. Civilization had cut people off from the right path and had led to modern warfare, pollution and social disintegration. The restoration of clean water in rivers and lakes represented the restoration of nature and humanity's psyche, while salmon (which can survive only in clean waters) symbolized the hope for the future.

In 1939, Williamson published *The Children of Shallowford*, in which he described the altruism of salmon in returning to the rivers of their birth, while accusing capitalism of causing natural and social disintegration. Order and inner harmony were the essence of the natural world, in

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contrast to the capitalist world of disorder, dishonesty and selfishness. His later books were sympathetic to fascism and Nazism. *A Solitary War* (1966) was dedicated to Mosley (the English fascist leader), and in *Lucifer before Sunrise* (1967) he argued that Hitler was attempting to foster the same rural and spiritual values in Germany that he was pursuing in Norfolk. This praise of Mosley and Hitler destroyed his reputation. Though he never recovered from his flirtation with National Socialism, he continued writing about ecological themes.[7]

Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919) and the Monist League

The very term "ecology" was coined by Haeckel to designate a new approach capable of shifting biology away from a mechanistic and laboratorial approach, to a holistic and environmental one.[8] His popular works, such as *The Riddles of the Universe* (1900) and *The Wonders of Life* (1905), were enormously influential in Germany, England and the US. An ex-Catholic, he developed a monism which connected spirit and matter as two sides of the same coin. He saw biology as paving the way for social and political innovations: a new path to avoid disintegration and decadence. As a 19th century scientist, he believed that social progress was possible only through an objective understanding of nature. Yet, "progress" was defined idiosyncratically. In 1900, he organized a contest for the best answer to the question: "What can we learn from the principles of Darwinism with respect to the internal development of a state?" The first prize went to Willhem Shallmayer, an advocate of Nordic racial superiority.

"Scientific" pantheism — the belief that race, soil and the vital forces of life reveal themselves in ethnic struggles and natural selection — was soon embodied in the Monist League, which became popular among scientists and academics, political reformers and agitators, and was immensely influential in Northern Europe. Through D. H. Lawrence, it influenced the British Soil Association and became associated with the Back-to-the-Land movement in England. Christianity was criticized as anthropocentric and replaced with Buddhism, which recognizes other beings as equally significant as human beings. The Monist League was the first eco-logical organization articulating any political views. Most of its members were Social Democrats, ex-revolutionaries, or anti-Conservatives. They believed in social progress, understood as the application of

7. Bramwell, *op. cit.*, pp. 145-6.

8. See Ernst Haeckel, *Knutsformen der Natur* (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1914) and James Ward, *Naturalism and Agnosticism* (New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1971).

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eugenic social policies. Arbitrary ranks were to be replaced by others based on racial and group purity, and on health criteria. For the League's members, society as an organic whole was far more sound and exciting than allegedly democratic politics run by power-hungry demagogues. Along with Comte and other technocrats, they believed that government should be left to experts. In this sense, their views were neither conservative nor socialist, and could be described as scientistic-authoritarian. As with Nazi ideology later, science and mysticism slowly replaced science and reason. The Monist League legacy was that humanity and nature are one, and that to damage one was to damage the other. Haeckel died in 1919, but his vision inspired a generation of Nordic youth in the pursuit of a new anti-democratic, naturalist alternative to technological civilization. Later on, many of the former Monist League's members enlisted in radical Right parties of their respective countries. Some even joined the SS.[9]

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)

Of these four figures, Martin Heidegger is perhaps both the most and the least "ecological" of all: the most, since he turned the human-nature link into the foundation of his philosophy; the least, since he remained outside any organized ecological movement. The analysis of authenticity *in* time clashed with Western mainstream philosophy, which regarded authenticity as frozen and timeless. Questioning existence as such, Heidegger was led to inquire about identity in the world — one's role and destiny. Why is it possible to identify Being as different, superior and an absolute form of common "beings"? Because people can speak, and thus can develop self-consciousness.

This uniqueness entailed responsibility not only for human existence, but for nature as well. "Becoming" meant coming closer to Being, to the one that forgot itself when it was first actualized into the world. It is possible to return to Being, yet this can happen only through nature. But there is a tendency to become lost in present preoccupations, thus abandoning the possibility of actualizing the environment's potentialities. As a result, "authentic" existence is lost. "Inauthenticity" turns out to be a depersonalized and objectified mode of being — sheer presence.

In his critique of consumerism, Heidegger called on humanity to accept its humble role as the world's shepherd, to reject domination and

9. For the close links between ecology and the SS, see Raymond Dominick, *The Environmental Movement in Germany: Prophets and Pioneers, 1871-1971* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

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exploitation, and to avoid technology.[10] History, for Heidegger, took the wrong path with the Roman mis-translation of Greek ideas. This is the source of the ruthlessness of Western thought, and of Heidegger's advocacy of the sanctity of the environment. The Latin *natura* allegedly translated the Greek *physis*. Yet, *natura* is not the same as *physis*, since the latter implies a process of coming into being — a creation almost identical to poetry (*poiesis*). In human action, this takes the form of *techne* — instrumental knowledge. Thus, natural *poiesis* and human *techne* are essentially similar, and lead to the realization of Being. Unfortunately, this connection vanished from Western philosophy with Plato (the split of authenticity from actuality) and later Descartes (knowledge as an "object" at human disposal). As long as the peasant lives in nature and works the land, the connection remains. When the land becomes a commodity (*techne*), it turns into technique. Knowledge is no longer holistic; it becomes an autonomous and enslaving technology. Capitalism and communism are two variants of human estrangement from nature. "Things" are no longer *onta* ("being as such"), but *antikeimena* ("those which stand affront"). The fatality of technicity is the result of the breaking of the links between *techne* and *poiesis*. As a result, alienation became integral to Western thought.

Though Heidegger had a grasp of ecology, he hesitated to allow biology to enter philosophy, on the grounds that it could not understand Being.[11] At any rate, science was the child of European estrangement — a cause and consequence of the loss of authentic existence. Along with the Nazis, Heidegger believed that the age of technology needed a new breed of men. Yet, first he hesitated,[12] and then refused to accept the commodification of existence.[13] Modern technology and the market tend to corrupt. Thus, his joining of the Nazi Party in 1933 was not opportunistic. His flirting with nature and his dislike of technology were consistent with Nazi ideology.

Confronting Technology

These four proto-ecologists shared a number of common themes. First, they were hostile to a technology independent of morality and

10. Martin Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy*, tr. by J. Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).

11. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, tr. By John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

12. Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Reasons*, tr. By Terrence Malick (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1969).

13. Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, tr. By Alfred Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

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community life, arguing that it contaminated social life: it destroyed the land and degraded people, diminishing their humanity. Second, they disliked modernity and its paraphernalia: urbanization, pollution, industrialization, capitalism, the undermining of traditional values, and the degradation of rural life. It all led to a loss of a sense of belonging and, more importantly, principles. In a word, people no longer know how to live. But there is a solution: the return to nature. This may be achieved through intuition, metaphors, or reason. Nature "knows," because human beings are part of it. The natural way will guarantee natural morality, social organization and economic well-being.

Why did this affection for nature and hostility to modernity bring ecologists close to National Socialism, as opposed to other forms of radicalism in the 1930s? Consider the common flirtation with romanticism, suggested by the fascination of both camps with the soil and, consequently, with naturalist morality. In politics, romanticism advocates what Weber called the ethics of ultimate ends, rather than the ethics of responsibility.[14] Yet, there is another, hidden aspect of romanticism. In its focus on the emotional dimension, romanticism remains as anthropocentric as rationalism. Nature continues to be merely available to humanity. Ecology and Nazism disagree about anthropocentrism, since ecology does not share the belief in the absolute supremacy of mankind. While the concept of *élan vital* seems close to the Nazi's will-to-power, for ecologists this vital force is shared by all living beings. Thus, the basis for the affinity between pre-war ecology and National Socialism may not be a common vision, but a common enemy: the culture of technology and its social implications. Jeffrey Herf suggests that the essence of National Socialism is hidden in "reactionary modernism," which flourished in Germany immediately after WWI. It resolved the old 19th century German conflict between passions and machinery.[15] Reactionary modernism stood for the embrace of modern technology, without abandoning romantic culture. This paradoxical solution was embraced by that radical Right which evolved into National Socialism.

There is no doubt that modern technology and science were employed by ecologists. Yet, technology was also seen as shrinking the connection between nature and people. It could not be accepted unconditionally, and

14. Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation" in *Weber: Selections in Translation*, ed. by W. G. Runciman, tr. By. Edward Matthews (London: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

15. Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 208.

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was rejected by Hamsun, Williamson and Heidegger. The Nazis had a similar attitude toward technology. In principle, they regarded it as destructive, yet in practice it was necessary for survival. The message of German reactionary modernism was that, since technology existed, it could not be ignored. The way to deal with it is never to let it go wild, as in capitalist societies, but to confine it within the cultural context of national life.[16] Liberalism, finance capitalism, selfishness, political clientelism, and, above all, the primacy of economics were the common enemies of Nazism and of ecological thought at the time. National Socialism provided an alternative to liberalism, fascism, and Bolshevism, all of which embraced the culture of industrialism. The Nazi "trademark" was not the restless entrepreneur, nor the heroic industrial worker, but the honest farmer.[17]

Deep Ecology and Ecofeminism

After WWII, "anti-modern ecology" remained alive in both Europe and the US. Part of it remains affiliated with the radical Right through *Heimat* ecology.[18] In Britain, it developed a new internationalist and pacifist identity with the aid of Ernst Friedrich Schumacher, Barry Commoner, and Michael Allaby, though it still advocated holistic, anti-technological approaches to environmental and social problems. Yet, the last three decades are characterized by new, non-traditionalist developments. They are political theories calling for the alteration of Western political structures and individual attitudes in the name of a healthy earth and humanity. Four main trends are predominant: Deep Ecology, Ecofeminism, Eco-Socialism and Social Ecology. Unlike traditional ecology, which depended on concepts of "authority" and advocated hierarchical social relations, they have all been developed around concepts of egalitarianism, equality and autonomy, and constitute the left-wing of ecologism.

16. According to Goebbels in 1939: "We live in the era of technology. The racing tempo of our century affects all areas of our life. There is scarcely an endeavor that can escape its powerful influence. Therefore, the danger unquestionably arises that modern technology will make men soulless. National Socialism never rejected or struggled against technology. Rather, one of its main tasks was to consciously affirm it, to fill it inwardly with soul, to discipline it and to place it in the service of our people and their cultural level." Cited in Herf, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

17. WWII Nazi propaganda posters depict this honest German farmer ploughing the land, not with the aid of a modern tractor (as in the Soviet posters), but with a pair of horses. See Anthony Rhodes, *Propaganda: The Art of Persuation* (New Jersey: The Wellfleet Press, 1987), p. 62.

18. For a critique of the current vitalist and mystical character of the *Heimat* trend see Janet Biehl, "Ecology and the Modernization of Fascism in the German Ultra-right," in *Society and Nature*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Spring 1993), pp. 130-170.

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Deep Ecology originated with Arne Naess.[19] It is based on two principles: first, that humanity is simply "part of the web of life"; second, that human realization is not automatic, but the result of identification with nature. Thus, Deep Ecology advocates a way of life causing the least possible harm to surroundings.[20] This leads to the rejection of Western rationality as alienating and destructive. For Deep Ecologists, the West is responsible for turning all living beings into soulless objects. Christianity and the doctrine of human superiority, Newtonian physics, the Enlightenment, and the objectification of nature are the major foes of the planet's ecosystem and mankind as integral parts of nature. Technology has not just destroyed the environment, but the spirit as well. Disconnected from personal skills and subsistence, the cult of technology has alienated people from the earth and from nature. Abandoning technology will result in the re-emergence of self-awareness, allowing all entities the "freedom to unfold in their own way unhindered by the various forms of human domination."[21]

Ecofeminism is closely associated with Deep Ecology.[22] It pays attention to 'natural' similarities between women and nature, and their common fate under male domination. Ecofeminism argues that women's biological make-up associates them directly with nature's domains of birth and nurture, *vis-á-vis* the masculine instincts of death and competition. Furthermore, women feel empathy to nature, since they share the exploitation and marginalization perpetrated by male oppressors.[23] While these principles are used in a variety of ways, Ecofeminism holds fast to the belief that nature is the archetypal woman, the provider of life and nurture *par excellence*.[24] It demands a decentralized, non-hierarchical,

19. Arne Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement — A Summary," *Inquiry* 16 (1973), pp. 128-131.

20. Robyn Eckersley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory: Towards an Ecocentric Approach* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992); Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered* (Salt Lake City: Petergreen Smith Books, 1985).

21. Warwick, Fox, *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology* (Boston: Shambhala, 1990), p. 116.

22. Janet Biehl, "Problems in Ecofeminism," in *Society and Nature*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Fall 1993), pp. 52-71.

23. Vandana Shiva, "The Seed and the Earth: Women, Ecology, and Bio-technology" in *The Ecologist*, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 4-7; Andree Collard and Joyce Contrucci, *Rape of the Wild: Man's Violence against Animals and the Earth* (London: The Women's Press, 1988).

24. Elizabeth Gray, *Green Paradise Lost* (Massachusetts: Roundtable Press, 1978); Susan Griffin, *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978); Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982).

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egalitarian society, organized around direct, face-to-face democracy. Eco-societies are seen as based on rural subsistence, small scale economies and soft technology. The new eco-logical society will be brought about by people, usually women, who accept the primacy of the feminine ideal.[25]

Deep Ecology and Ecofeminism belong to the naturalist camp, since they agree that nature, as it is in its myriad non-human personae, is the Eden that has been abandoned and attacked directly (men vs. nature) and indirectly (men vs. women and nature).[26] Nature is recognized as the proper environment, the source of morality, ethics and correct social conduct. Respect for human life and its diverse cultural expressions does not have to derive from anthropocentric rules. There is a natural rule, deeply embedded in everyone: respect for all life-forms.[27] Ecocentric society can be best envisioned by examining desirable forms of social organization. This should, and will be based on what Donald Worster calls the "Arcadian ecological tradition," which suggests "a simple rural life in close harmony with nature: coexistence rather than domination; humility rather than self-assertion; man as part of, rather than superior to nature as the organic, communal ideal."[28] As for actual relations with nature, Jeremy Rifkin's notion of empathetic and *technological* knowledge provides the necessary boundaries to the model.[29] It is a matter of small rural communities, using home-made tools, pursuing a horticultural economy, following intuitive knowledge and mystical contacts.

Deep Ecology and Ecofeminism do not have much new to say about people and nature. Most of what they despise is not different from what pre-war ecologists also despised: materialism, technocracy, positivism, selfishness, apocalyptic religions, wealth. They also support what pre-war ecologists profess: intuition, nature-inspired morality, small rural communities, technical knowledge. In theory, they push the golden age

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25. Marilyn Waring, *If Women Counted: A New Feminist Economics* (San Francisco: Harper and Collins, 1988).

26. Fox makes clear that Deep Ecology does not ignore that there is environmental destruction and anthropocentrism everywhere. On the contrary, it recognizes that white men are mostly responsible for the disconnection of people from the rest of the species. See his "The Deep Ecology — Feminist Debate and its Parallels," in *Environmental Ethics* (Spring 1989). Such an argument, with the addition that Deep Ecology is not against people, but against anthropomorphism. It associates Deep Ecology and Ecofeminism so closely as to eclipse all other differences.

27. Eckersley, *op. cit.*

28. Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1977), p. 378.

29. Jeremy Rifkin, *Algeny: A New World* (New York: The Viking Press, 1983).

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of humanity further back into history. While pre-war ecologists and their *Heimat* colleagues would be content with a medieval, agrarian, social organization, the new eco-centrics propose a neolithism wrapped in a Buddhist world-view.[30] Egalitarianism may be challenged, yet nature's moral centrality and their passionate anti-Enlightenment views fix the vision of both pre- and post-war naturalists to the past, rather than to the future. Nostalgia is the core of their vision which, however, is politically blind and allows others to instrumentalize naturalism.

National Socialism used ecological nostalgia to inspire loyalty in a people longing for roots without itself complying to such a vision. Today, Deep Ecology and Ecofeminism also fail to articulate any political program, other than by calling for individual life-style changes, direct anti-machinery action reminiscent of "Earth First!," and generating support for "Greenpeace" or "Friends of the Earth." Yet, even without a clear political program, their naturalist, nostalgic trend remains attractive. The sheer longevity of the trend, its popularity and devotion among younger and older followers, both before and after WWII, begs for an explanation. To help provide one, it may be helpful to examine two alternatives, which do not accept the predominance of an instinctual retreat to nature: Eco-Socialism, and Social Ecology.

Eco-Socialism and Social Ecology

Eco-Socialism is based on orthodox Marxism, with a few ecological modifications. Allegedly, the "flaw" of orthodox Marxism is that it excludes culture and the environment by focusing only on economics. In attempting to bring the environment back into Marxism, James O'Connor has supplemented the concepts of *modes* and *means* of production with a third one: *conditions* of production,[31] which allow Eco-Socialism to analyze capitalism from a new angle. Capitalism faces not just one, but two contradictions: over-production (due to the productive forces), and under-production (due to productive conditions). The trade-off between them benefits capitalism, by postponing the final crisis and avoiding both over- and under-production. Yet, Eco-Socialism is not a naturalistic philosophy. Since nature is socially constructed, it does not have moral authority. Instead, it serves as a reflection of human morality. Since capitalist

30. Marija Gimbutas, *The Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe — 6500-3500 b.c.* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982).

31. James O'Connor, "Capitalism, Nature, Socialism," in *Society and Nature*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Spring 1992), pp. 174-202.

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contradictions will eventually disappear, the vicious cycle of excessive production and consumption will end. If collectively controlled, production and industry can be liberating forces. The collective control of resources, work and modern technology will guarantee the end of human and environmental exploitation by re-orienting human needs. Changing the mode of production will: (a) become adaptive to all nature and no longer destructive; and (b) strengthen the producers' competence and controlling power.[32]

Eco-Socialism insists that an anthropocentric worldview does not have to be environmentally destructive. It is possible to remain loyal to Enlightenment principles without destroying the material basis of social emancipation. This brings Eco-Socialism uncomfortably close to instrumental environmentalists, who remain committed to mixed economy principles. Eco-Socialism does not abandon the materialist principles of capitalism and Marxism. Capitalism's ability to adapt to diverse environments with one purpose in view — profit — contradicts Eco-Socialist principles only on matters of redistribution. They both agree that nature is a warehouse for satisfying human needs. In other words, Eco-Socialism does not have the answer to the question of whether it is possible to integrate ecology into a political project without abandoning the Enlightenment project.

The second alternative to naturalist ecology, Social Ecology, advocates "small-scale, local and decentralized technological, ecological, and social alternatives to advanced industry's totalitarian technical regime."[33] These social aims seem to be consistent with radical Enlightenment principles only as long as the theory's foundations remain unexamined. Here, Social Ecology departs from its leftist predecessors. People are not potential masters of nature, seeking to achieve freedom through a Kantian emancipation. Instead, "freedom" is understood as a continuous longing for diversity, plurality and subjectivity in both humanity and nature. Humanity is informed by principles common to all creations. Yet, people have a special mission, since they are the only self-conscious creatures. Humanity's aim should not be to dominate nature, but to transform its "blind freedom" into a self-conscious one. Informed by this axiom, Social Ecology is predicated on a radical understanding of the interaction between human beings and nature as a political relation. People began oppressing nature when they began oppressing each other. Human oppression continuously

32. David Pepper, *Eco-socialism: from Deep Ecology to Social Justice* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 220-241.

33. Tim Luke, "Radical Ecology and the Crisis of Political Economy" in *Telos* 46 (Winter 1980-81), p. 100.

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destroys "first" (nature) and "second nature" (society).[34]

A permanent solution to environmental and social degradation can be achieved by abolishing all social domination and by developing a new, "natural society," anarchic in form, ecological in essence, combining non-hierarchical social relations of pre-literate peoples with modern knowledge and skills to achieve a truly democratic and ecological society. This transformation should take place both at the individual and at the structural level, leading to a free, rational and ethical nature, in which "human conceptual thought, placed not 'over' first nature, but in the service of both natural and social evolution, forms a new symbiotic relation between human communities and the non-human eco-communities in which they are located."[35] Here, the definitions of "freedom" and "oppression" are crucial, since a refutation of their particular meaning leaves the theory without concrete foundations, forcing it to "retreat" to a conventional humanist position, such as Eco-Socialism, where nature is seen as an object, rather than a subject.

Social Ecology wants to reshape nature, to turn it into a rational agent through rational human action. Accordingly, there is a tendency within substance toward life, consciousness, and self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is the final step toward overt and absolute freedom, understood as the absolute self-determination of all life-forms. Yet, its highest development is reached in the human potentiality for self-consciousness and self-determination.[36] As people become free, i.e., self-determined, they actively intervene in nature to promote the continuation of natural and social evolution, turning "blind nature" into "free nature in a non-dominating, non-hierarchical outlook."[37] Here, however, Social Ecology collapses a cognitive category into a political one. Self-consciousness is confused with self-determination. Self-consciousness can refer either to instrumental or value-oriented rationality. Assuming that social ecologists refer to the latter, ecologically-aware people determined to act eco-logically will constantly have to deal with the "meaning" of their everyday actions. Aware of possible misconduct against others, and forced to constantly confront the ecological consequences of their actions, they will

34. Murray Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1982).
35. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
36. John Clark, "The Philosophy of Social Ecology," in *Society and Nature,* Vol. 1, No. 2 (Spring 1992), pp. 49-59.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

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reach a point of total paralysis. Their constant doubts could be resolved by a Weberian "emissary prophet," who would think "on their behalf" and instruct them concerning ecologically sound behavior. This external guidance, however, is unacceptable to Social Ecology, since it contradicts the ecological actors' self-determination.

If self-consciousness refers to instrumental rationality, it is not a matter of self-determination, but of fully understanding what shapes social life. Here, the difference is subtle, but crucial: to understand the social situation means to understand (a) the choices that are possible at any given time and place, and (b) the cultural standards which restrict and allow action to take place. One can be fully self-conscious and still choose a limitation of freedom in return for the security and comfort provided by paternalistic hierarchies and moral restrictions. If Social Ecology refers to a particular kind of self-determination — an "ecological" one, which does not fall victim to Hobbesian anarchy — then this self-determination would be restricted culturally. The alternative for every member of the eco-community is to turn into an "exemplary prophet," adhering to the highest possible standards of moral conduct.

Problems with social action in a eco-community are intrinsically linked to contact with the physical environment. Intervention into natural evolution in "non-dominating, non-hierarchical ways"[38] is an unclear notion. What is the difference between a non-hierarchical and a hierarchical intervention, when dealing with people operating in a non-conscious environment? Unilateral action, as in the case of people deciding to change the landscape, implies *de facto* domination. It is the will of one "ecologically minded" human actor toward an entity which does not have, and will never have, the possibility to participate in the decision. Even if the action of an ecological society is beneficial to both people and nature, it still constitutes paternalistic action. Yet, Social Ecologists insist on regarding ecological intervention as non-domination, otherwise it would contradict their view that domination is evil and that only evil can be produced from it. Thus, for Social Ecology, long-term, stable and smooth cooperation among self-determined individuals, with a clear idea of what is good for nature, becomes virtually impossible.

Murray Bookchin claims that nature is moral and in full agreement with Social Ecology. Moral nature reads as follows: first, the history of nature reveals a tendency toward freedom through ever-increasing degrees

38. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

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of subjectivity via diversification of life forms and human cultures; second, symbiosis, mutual aid and co-operation prevail in intra-species relations. But is this a valid interpretation of evolution and behavior? Speciation (a biological tendency) and the conscious ability to act at will (a political characteristic) belong to two different logical universes, which can be brought together only through a loose nominalistic association. Darwinism, the most accepted general theory of natural evolution, is clear: speciation is a *random, non-directional* phenomenon of successful mutations. Human action is neither random nor mutant. The difference between nature's speciation and human freedom is qualitative, not quantitative. While in a dialectical framework qualitative differences could be overlooked for the sake of a higher, heuristic, meta-understanding, the latter remains unwarranted. In nature, there are not only mutual relations, but a mixture of selfish and altruistic behavior, primarily committed to successful procreation and the survival of the species.[39] Something of the kind has been identified in human behavior directly linked to physiology (e.g., hormonal fluctuations, brain-structure, perceptual and cognitive mechanisms). To speak of a totally rational, selfless society is to speak about a society of immaterial beings. This spoils the holistic, ethical view of Social Ecology.

The Essential Ecology

If there is no possible link between a humanist and a naturalist philosophy, ecologism has to be equated with naturalism. Accordingly, humanism can never answer ultimate questions concerning the meaning of life. This is why nature is needed to provide a secure reference point. Here, the ecological argument reveals its moral essence. Fear of the waste of material resources, soil erosion or biological extinctions are not really essential. They are the evidence for, rather than the core of the ecological argument. Hamsun writes about the corruption of cities; Williamson about social disintegration and modern, satanic war-machines; Haeckel wonders about the decline of civilization and appreciates modern biology (nature as the provider of a non-anthropocentric way to judge life and meaning); Heidegger seeks an identity as much as an ethics (the proper ethics for a people who become "historical" and have to decide how to march toward destiny and become reunited with Being). Naess, Fox, Pietila and Eckersley follow the same lines: people are not in contact with

39. Roger Masters, *The Nature of Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

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their real nature. Only by returning to nature is it possible to find real identity.[40] Why this anxious quest for a stable, apodictic ethics?

Haeckel and Heidegger were devout Catholics who abandoned their faith, while Hamsun and Williamson were Protestants. Today, most Greens come from a Protestant background and have experienced the same "disillusionment" with Left politics. Subsequently, they became attracted to nature in the quest for the kind of moral and political guidance hitherto provided by religion.[41] For these people, ecological thought is essentially a moral quest, which translates into a search for a meaningful metaphysics that atheism or Protestantism cannot provide. Protestantism lacks the mystical experience of ultimate truth. Yet this lack is compensated for by iconizing nature as the divine. Heidegger and Haeckel did not replace their Catholicism with science and philosophy, but sought stability in nature: the only other solid source of commitment and inspiration. In all cases, the foe is technology, high culture, short-sighted rationality, and decadence. The real enemy is the alienation of the modern world from its natural surroundings. The foe is high culture, which operates independently of nature, leading mankind and nature to destruction. Humanity is not the center of the universe, since emancipation has brought moral and social disintegration. What Hamsun, Williamson, Haeckel and Heidegger argued for, and today's ecologists reiterate, is a reconciliation with life, which can be achieved only through an authentic connection with nature.

Ecology and Modernity

An ecologist recently wrote that "what we knew already intuitively, now we know scientifically."[42] This could have been written by Haeckel a century ago. Rationality and intuition remain the *sine qua non* core ingredients of political ecology. Social Ecology, the most significant branch of current ecological thought, has tried to escape this uncomfortable combination, using instead ecology and humanism. Yet, this is not a

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40. As Peter Bunyard and Fern Morgan-Grenville remark, "in modern farming the farm-worker is increasingly isolated from the soil he is tilling; he sits encased in his tractor cab . . . and what goes on behind the tractor has more to do with the wonders of technology than with the wisdom of countless generations of his predecessors." Cited in Andrew Dobson, *Green Political Thought* (London: Methuen, 1990), p. 27.

41. Manussos Marangudakis, "Anthropocentrism and Ecocentrism in the Environmental Movement," in Louise Saint-Laurent and Elizabeth Quellet, eds., *Actes du Colloque Etudient Interuniversiterre de Sociologie*, No. 2 (Quebec City: Laval University Press, 1992), pp. 155-181.

42. Reed Noss, *Wild Life* Magazine (Spring 1991).

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successful partnership. It promises that ecology could be warmer, much more humane than its predecessor, the ecology of Williamson, Heidegger, even Naess. Humanism, however, is not able to close the gap between society and nature. Purposeful human beings and *sui generis* ecosystems constitute an uncomfortable combination, rather than a happy blend. Despite Bookchin's claim, Social Ecology does not provide any new teleology, since the non-human world could never enter historicity as a self-conscious actor. Yet, the urge to create a new ontological paradigm is as strong as it was one hundred years ago. The lack of mystical metaphysics in secularism and in Protestant dogma, the decline of traditional Western religions and the trust in people's ability to rule the world, have created a spiritual vacuum. Nature, once the paradise of anti-modernity, now promises redemption through an egalitarian society. But the question remains: which one will be primary — the social or the natural domain? Pre-war as well as contemporary ecologists of Deep Ecology and Ecofeminism may be wrong, but they are clear: the natural domain should be primary. This is not qualitatively different from traditional religions' insistence on the primacy of God, understood as a transcendent Being beyond full human apprehension and appreciation. The continuing tension between realist and fundamentalist Greens in Germany over this question reflects the dilemma many political ecologists face. It is but another version of the old struggle between modernity and its opponents. Unless we wish to bring back God as a medium to transcend and thus to consolidate the two incompatible categories of nature and society, a choice must be made between them.[43] Humanism, by definition, should choose the primacy of society. Here, Tim Luke's analysis of an alternative social framework predicated on small communities, grass-roots democracy and ecological sensitivity, rather than on ecological ontology, may provide a viable solution to the dilemma.[44] His message is that freedom should be sought in organic communities rooted in their own particular culture. One should be cautious about this happy message. As the Frankfurt School has warned, a society of freedom is a perpetually unstable project. Passions and interest, even the irrational embedded in culture, remain. A project wishing to suggest a society of freedom should aim to accommodate, not to ignore them.

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43. See Manussos Marangudakis, "The Metaphysical Uncertainties of Political Ecology," in *Democracy and Nature* Vol. 3, No. 11-12 (Fall 1998; forthcoming).

44. Luke, "Radical Ecology," *op. cit.*, pp. 87-111.

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The Spanish Federalist Tradition and the 1978 Constitution

Daniele Conversi

The Roots of Spanish Federalism

Spain's successful transition to democracy (1975-1982) was influenced profoundly by a long-standing 19th-century federalist tradition.[1] Although, as elsewhere, early federalism was understood mostly in territorial terms, in Spain it gradually took on ethnic connotations. By denouncing the monolithic, pre-democratic nation-state, the federalist vision emphasized different cultures and languages. Thus Spain was seen as an ethnically pluralistic country. A homogeneous Spain would have been inconsistent with a pluralistic concept of "Spanishness."

Two visions of Spain, the centralist and the federalist-regionalist, have competed since the beginning of the 19th century, as part of a long-standing political conflict between centralizing attempts and regional resistance.[2] They have generated conflicting concepts of the "nation," which in turn has changed meaning from the time of the first Spanish Constitutions (1812 and 1837) to the present.[3] At any rate, Spanish nationalism came into being only with the advent of modernity, after the anti-French uprising leading to the Peninsular War (1808).

In the second half of the 19th century, these two visions evolved into

1. For an extensive treatment of the events which led to the Spanish transition, see Daniele Conversi, *The Basques, the Catalans and Spain* (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 1997).

2. Solange and Christian Gras, "La Crise de l'État-Nation: Le Cas Espagnol," in *Pluriel*, No. 25 (1981), pp. 53-63.

3. Xavier Arbos, *La Idea de Nació en el Primer Constitucionalisme Espanyol* (Barcelona: Curial, 1986).

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the unitarian organicism of most Spanish elites and a republican federalist tradition based primarily in Catalonia. Its main proponent and ideologue, Francisco Pi y Margall (1824-1901),[4] spoke of "nationalities" to distinguish the historical regions with a common culture and past history from the politically dominant Spanish nation.[5] A disciple of Pierre Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865), Margall espoused federalism as a political doctrine in opposition to unitarism.[6] This distinction became crucial in the constitutional debate of the 1970s and in the management of ethnic conflict throughout the transition period. Margall was an Americanist who had been inspired by the colonial and pre-colonial American experience.[7] Thus he sought a resolution of the question of Catalan particularity as part of the overall reconstitution of the Spanish state.[8] Margall influenced subsequent generations of Catalan nationalist leaders, such as Antoni Rovira i Virgili (1882-1949)[9] as well as Barcelona's anarchists.[10]

After the chaotic experience of the First Republic, of which Margall was the first President (February 1873), his pluralistic vision was eclipsed[11]

4. The Catalanized name, Francesc Pi i Margall, is often preferred in the literature in Catalan. For a comprehensive vision of Margall's work, see Antoni Jutglar, *Pi y Margall y el Federalismo Español* (Madrid: Taurus, 1975); *El Constitucionalismo Revolucionario de Pi y Margall* (Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, 1970); and *Federalismo y Revolución* (Barcelona: Cátedra de Historia General de España, 1966).

5. Francisco Pi y Margall, *Las Nacionalidades* (Barcelona: Producciones Editoriales, 1979). 1st ed. (Madrid: Impremta y Libreria de E. Martinez, 1877).

6. Francisco Pi y Margall, *Unitarismo y Federalismo* (Madrid: Emiliano Escolar, 1981); and *Ideari de Francesc Pi i Margall* (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1965). In order to popularize federalism, Margall translated Proudhon's *The Principle of Federation* (Toronto/ Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1979), as well as other works on the subject.

7. Francisco Pi y Margall, *Historia General de America Desde sus Tiempos mas Remotos* (Madrid: Astort Hermanos, 1878); *Historia de la America Antecolombiana* (Barcelona: Montaner y Simon, 1892); and *America en la Época del Descubrimiento* (Madrid: Sucesores de Rivadeneira, 1892).

8. Francisco Pi y Margall, *La Questió de Catalunya: Escrits i Discursos* (Barcelona: Alta Fulla, 1978).

9. Antoni Rovira i Virgili, *Lectura de Pi i Margall* (Barcelona: Edicions de la Magrana/ Diputació de Barcelona, 1990).

10. Antoni Rovira i Virgili, *Lecciones de Federalismo* (Barcelona: Segui, 1931). Margall defined the federation as "a system whereby different groups join and submit to the entirety of the members of their own species for their common goals, without losing their autonomy in what is unique to them. . . . It establishes unity without destroying variety and it might succeed in reuniting the whole of mankind without altering the character of nations, provinces and peoples, or threatening their independence." See Margall, *Las Nacionalidades, op. cit.*, pp. 93-4.

11. During the first Republican experience, federalism merged with localist particularism degenerating into *cantonalism*, as ever smaller towns declared "independence." See Charles A. M. Hennessy, *The Federal Republic in Spain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

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and the idea of a monolithic Spain became dominant up to the 1930s. Yet many regionalist movements remained commited to federalism, particularly in Catalonia. Catalan nationalism was first formulated in *Lo Catalanisme* (1886) by Valentí Almirall (1841-1904), then developed more fully in *La Nacionalitat Catalana* (1906) by Enric Prat de la Riba (1870-1917).[12] These key texts, as in most Catalanist literature, defined Catalonia as a distinctive entity. From the pages of *Diari Català*, the first newspaper in Catalan, Almirall launched a crusade to "re-invent" Spain as a federal entity. Almirall was Margall's disciple and, in his defense of Catalonia's economic interests, he sought to reinstate the Republicans' federal tradition.[13] His approach was not exclusively Catalan, since he never abandoned the project of extending a pluralistic framework to all of Spain.[14] Although his program was relatively moderate,[15] Almirall became the architect of political Catalanism.[16] According to a more "instrumentalist" view, his main platform was a defense of regional economic interests, which needed a cultural basis in order to be articulated politically.[17]

Following Almirall, Enric Prat de la Riba drew an even sharper distinction between *state* and *nation*: Spain was a state, not a nation, while Catalonia was a nation, but it had no state.[18] Spain was a "geographical expression" and a "collection of nations," all of which "should have their own state."[19] His vision of Catalonia was essentially "bourgeois" and unreceptive to the main problem of the time, i.e., growing labor unrest.[20] His work, however, was appreciated even by "progressive" nationalist

12. Valentí Almirall, *Lo Catalanisme* (Barcelona: Edicions 62/ La Caixa de Pensions, MOLC, 1979); Enric Prat de la Riba, *La Nacionalitat Catalana* (Barcelona: Edicions 62 / La Caixa de Pensions, MOLC, 1978).

13. Valentí Almirall, *Articles politics: "Diari Catala" (1879-1881)* (Barcelona: Edicions de la Magrana, 1984). Almirall was owner and director of the newspaper *Diari Catala* from 1879 to 1881.

14. Valentí Almirall, *España Tal Como Es* (Madrid: Seminarios y Ediciones, 1972); and *Obras y Escritos Políticos y Literarios* (Barcelona: A. Lopez, 1902).

15. Valentí Almirall, *Cultura i Societat* (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1985).

16. Josep M. Figueres, *Valentí Almirall: Forjador del Catalanisme Polític* (Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya/Diari Oficial i de Publicacions, 1990). See also Juan J. Trias Vejarano, *Almirall y los Origenes del Catalanismo* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1975).

17. Jordi Solé Tura, *Ideari de Valentí Almirall* (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1974).

18. Enric Prat de la Riba, *La Nació i l'Estat: Escrits de Joventut* (Barcelona: Edicions de la Magrana/ Diputació de Barcelona, 1987).

19. Riba, *La Nacionalitat Catalana*, *op. cit.*

20. Jordi Solé Tura, *Catalanisme i Revolució Burgesa* (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1967). For an overview of Prat's approach to the social question, see Enric Prat de la Riba, *El Pensament Social de Prat de la Riba. Exposat per Ell Mateix* (Barcelona: Bosch, 1971).

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historians, such as Rovira i Virgili.[21] Prat's main strength was as an organizer rather than as an intellectual. As president of the newly established Mancomunitat (1914-17) — a sort of inter-provincial government — he supervised the establishment of the first major Catalan cultural institutions.[22] The standardization of the Catalan language, completed by Pompeu Fabra (1863-1948), was one of Prat's main achievements.[23] But by that time, Catalanism no longer spoke in the name of an all-encompassing Spanish nationalism or "regenerationism."[24] It had become a full-fledged nationalist movement. Yet regionalist views persisted among the movement's more moderate members, such as Francesc Cambó (1876-1947) and other exponents of the main regionalist party (the *Lliga*). Its aim was to re-construct Spain from the perspective of its historical regions.[25] The ambiguity between nationalism and purely regenerationist principles was never fully resolved. At least until the Civil War, there was always a tacit longing to redefine Spain and the entire Iberian peninsula from Barcelona's perspective. At that time, Catalanism could be seen as a form of Spanish nationalism also appreciated by the more moderate Spanish political elites. However, Madrid's response to these appeals was often rejection and suspicion — even resentment for the Catalans' "daring" attitude and its their alleged attempts to usurp Madrid's power. In a sense, it was a competition between regional elites. This obviously engendered more radical forms of resistence and protest in the periphery, whose elites slowly abandoned the project of remaking Spain in order to concentrate on their region's self-definition.[26]

Once Catalan nationalism was defined by Almirall and Prat, its doctrinal body remained stable until the Second Republic (1931-39). Similarly, in the Basque Country, the vision developed by Sabino de Arana y Goiri (1865-1903) remained unchanged, even after the Civil War. Basically, these nationalist formulations responded to predominant state policies as well as

21. Antoni Rovira i Virgili, *Prat de la Riba* (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1968).

22. Jaume Bofill i Mates, *Prat de la Riba i la Cultura Catalana* (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1979); Enric Prat de la Riba, *Prat de la Riba: Propulsor de la Llengua i la Cultura; Articles i Parlaments* (Barcelona: Editorial Selecta, 1974).

23. Mila Segarra, *Pompeu Fabra* (Barcelona: Empuries, 1991).

24. In Spanish, "*Regeneracionismo*" indicates a wide intellectual and political current calling for the "regeneration" of Spain in the aftermath of the loss of Empire (1898). Catalanism was part of the Regenerationist movement, with the only difference being its response to this generalized Spanish malaise was couched in regionalist terms.

25. See Francesc Cambó, *Per Catalunya i l'Espanya Gran*, which advocated a Catalan state within an Iberian federation (possibly including Portugal).

26. See Charles E. Ehrlich, "Per Catalunya i l'Espanya Gran: Catalan Regionalism on the Offensive, 1911-19," in *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 2.

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to internal conditions. Whenever the state reacted favorably to nationalist aspirations, the peripheral nationalists' demands were mollified. Whenever the state became more intolerant, the movements became radicalized.[27]

The brief interlude of the Second Republic re-introduced a pluralistic concept of Spanish nationhood in constitutional debates, which eventually resulted in the approval of Catalonia's first autonomy statute.[28] With the Francoist insurrection and the advance of Spanish troops in Catalonia, these gains came to an abrupt end. The Civil War (1936-39) was the great fault line between opposing concepts of nationhood: its outcome saw the apotheosis of a unitarian vision of Spanishness. Against this vision, and as a mirror image of it, new forms of Basque and Catalan nationalism emerged.

The Poverty of Cultural Homogenization

Assimilation and congruence between state and nation have been a traditional aim of Madrid's elites since at least the first failed centralization attempts by the Conde-Duque de Olivares (1587-1645).[29] The most systematic efforts in this direction, however, were exerted only recently under the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco (1939-75).[30] Within the Francoist entourage, the strongest advocate of this view was the far-right Falange Española, which was predominant in the government during

27. Sabino de Arana's version of nationalism was a blend of neo-traditionalism, clericalism, racialism and linguistic nationalism. See Daniele Conversi "The Influence of Culture on Political Choices: Language Maintenance and its Implications for the Basque and Catalan Nationalist Movements," in *History of European Ideas*, Vol. 16, No. 1-3 (1993), pp. 189-200. Arana was not influenced by federal Republicans, but his political platform can be seen as a direct response to the policies of the Spanish state. Basque nationalism was born largely as a reaction against the abolition of traditional provincial prerogatives (*fueros*) and the increasing centralization following the Basque defeat in the Second Carlist War (1872-76). This anti-centralist reaction merged with an anti-modernist and anti-urban trend resulting from the problems caused by rapid industrialization. See José Luis de la Granja Sainz, "La Invención de la Historia. Nación, Mitos e Historia en el Pensamiento del Fundador del Nacionalismo Vasco" (Unpublished manuscript, 1994).

28. Joseph Roig i Rosich, *L'Estatut de Catalunya a les Corts Constituents: (1932)* (Barcelona: Curial, 1978).

29. See J. H. Elliott. *The Count-Duke of Olivares: The Statesman in an Age of Decline* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986). Olivares' policies resembled those of his French counterpart Armand Jean du Plessis, cardinal et duc de Richelieu (1585-1642). See J. H. Elliott *Richelieu and Olivares* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

30. Before 1939, the Spanish state had failed to undertake any serious project of nation-building. See Xavier Arbos and Antoni Puigsec, *Franco i l'Espanyolisme* (Barcelona: Curial, 1980); Salvador Giner, "Nacionalismo Étnico: Centro y Periferia en España," in Francesc Hernández and Francesc Mercadé, eds., *Estructuras Sociales y Cuestión Nacional en España* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1986), p. 447.

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the dictatorship's early stage (1939 to 1945). A strong, homogenized state had become an obsession for Madrid's conservative elites since the time of the Second Spanish Republic (1931-1939). Thus, when the right-wing MP José Calvo Sotelo (1893-1936) boasted: "I would prefer a Red Spain to a broken Spain,"[31] he exemplified the driving force of the ensuing Falangist campaigns. According to the Falangists, the "separatists" were guilty of "ignoring the unitarian reality of Spain."[32] The key element of these campaigns was the imposition of a single language, Spanish, through a centralized education system. Coercion rather than consensus became the preferred instrument of rule, and the regime did not hesitate to back its Draconian laws with police repression. The "need" for a common language coextensive with culture, state and territory was adduced as a necessary condition for an orderly government — a Jacobin stress on cultural homogeneity, which was a standard feature of the fascist call for a strong, self-sufficient unitary state.[33] Everyone had to speak "fluently the tongue of Spanish unity, the ecumenical language of our Spanishness."[34] Spanish was the language of the empire and for this reason "it must be spoken all over the state territory."[35]

In 1959, Franco reshuffled his cabinet, allowing a group of Catholic technocrats to take over key positions by instituting a Stabilization Plan strongly favoring the introduction of a market economy. This had immediate and wide-ranging consequences: the post-1963 Spanish "economic miracle," during which the growth rate in Spain outpaced that of all other European countries. Despite his unmitigated authoritarianism, Franco had to allow a modicum of free expression in order to encourage the influx of capital needed for his ambitious development programs. At this point, the Catalan resistance took advantage of all the chinks in the regime's armor. At least since 1945, a low-key linguistic revival had begun in secluded circles of friends and personal acquaintances. Despite constant obstacles

31. Cited in Máximiano García Venero, *Historia del Nacionalismo Vasco* (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1968), p. 561.

32. Quoted in Eduardo Alvarez Puga, *Diccionario de la Falange* (Barcelona: Dopesa, 1937), pp. 12-3.

33. There were considerable similarities between the fascist, Nazi, Francoist, and Vichy models of cultural assimilation. See Karl Ille, "Discorso Politico e Glottopolitica all'Epoca Fascista: Fascismo-Nazismo-Franchismo-Vichy," in *Lingua e Stile*, Vol. XXVI, No. 1 (1991), pp. 17-34.

34. Quoted in Puga, *Diccionario de la Falange*, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 36, italics added. The quoted text also refers to the Francoist directive posted in various Catalan public places intimating "*Habla el idioma del imperio*" ("Speak the language of the empire"), i.e., Spanish.

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placed on their path by the authorities, the movement grew slowly and provided a common platform to the Catalan opposition. Among other things, it provided a much-needed inter-generational liaison.

Basque nationalism lacked similar resources for expressing Basque identity. The use of Euskara was confined to rural and small town milieux. Thus it could not function as a bond between classes and generations. It could neither bridge the urban-rural divide nor the immigrant-native gap. An inter-generational crisis ensued, becoming the hallmark of Basque nationalism in the 1960s. A group of radical youth formally founded ETA (Euskadi 'ta Askatasuna) in 1959, the very year Franco decided to put an end to Spain's "splendid isolation." Mainly because of the lack of free speech, ETA slowly evolved from a cultural elite into a violent organization dedicated to armed struggle.

By the early 1970s, Spain had become fertile ground for ethnic mobilization. Francoist repression only succeeded in reinforcing the determination of Basque and Catalan nationalists. The regime had failed in its original *raison d'être*, i.e., to re-establish "order and unity." When Franco died on November 20, 1975, nationalist mobilizations were increasing at such a pace that the country's territorial integrity seemed to be at stake. On September 11, 1977, over one million people marched in the streets of Barcelona and other Catalan towns demanding "freedom, amnesty and a statute of autonomy." A few months later, on December 4, similar demonstrations took place throughout Andalusia, when nearly a million people marched to demand Andalusian autonomy. New regional challenges surfaced in Galicia, Asturies and Aragon. In the Basque Country, ETA stepped up its attacks on Spanish military and paramilitary targets to unprecedented levels, and toward the end of the 1970s over 100 people were being killed yearly in ETA-related violence.[36] At the same time, the Army and the old Francoist cadres entrenched in their "bunkers" were ready to strike at the earliest occasion to re-establish their authority.[37] The "founding fathers" of democratic Spain had a truly daunting task ahead.

The Watershed: A New Constitution for a New Country

The period from the first general elections of June 1977 to the popular approval of the Constitution (December 1978) was crucial. As with the

36. Robert P. Clark, *Negotiating With ETA. Obstacles to Peace in the Basque Country, 1975-1988* (Reno, Nevada: Nevada University Press, 1990).

37. In Spain, the term "bunker" referred to the "extreme right committed to fighting democracy from the rubble of Francoism." See Paul Preston, *The Triumph of Democracy in Spain* (London/ New York: Methuen, 1986), p. 232.

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demise of most dictatorial regimes, the accommodation of minority aspirations in Spain was inextricably bound with the democratization process.[38] Democracy meant the first real possibility for decades of submerged nationalist feelings to express their voices freely.[39] The Constitution was the product of the encounter of the two concepts of Spain (Federalist and Unitarian) that had been competing for over 150 years. The constitutional process began on June 15, 1977, with the first democratic elections in post-Franco Spain and ended with the approval of the Constitution.[40] Although the elections were not focused primarily on a constitutional agenda, most elected MPs saw this as their main objective.[41] On July 26, only thirteen days after the establishment of the Congress of Deputies (Cámara Baja) and the Senate (Cámara Alta), a 36-member Constitutional Affairs Commission was set up, which in turn assigned to a seven-member working group the specific task of drafting the Constitution.[42] The main reason for this quick pace was political, intellectual and media pressure. At least since Franco's death, the press, academia, and most political parties had insisted on the need to draft a new Constitution.[43] The process really began within a few hours after the convening of the Joint Houses of Parliament (Cortes Generales). In the opening ceremony, King Juan Carlos[44] announced: "The Crown, by interpreting the

38. The Constitution was passed by the *Cortes Generales* in a plenary meeting of the Congress of Deputies and the Senate (October 31, 1978). It was then ratified by popular vote in a referendum (December 7) and finally sanctioned by the King before the *Cortes* on December 27. See Paul Heywood, *The Government and Politics of Spain* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996).

39. See Richard Gunther, Giacomo Sani and Goldie Shabad, *Spain after Franco. The Making of a Competitive Party System* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Juan J. Linz, "Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes," in Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby, eds., *Macropolitical Theory*, Vol. 3 of *Handbook of Political Science* (Menlo Park, CA: Addison Wesley, 1975); Juan J. Linz, "An Authoritarian Regime: Spain," in Erik Allardt and Stein Rokkan, eds., *Mass Politics. Studies in Political Sociology* (New York: Free Press, 1970).

40. Jorge de Esteban, "El Proceso Constituyente Español 1977-1978," in José Felix Tezanos, Ramon Cotarelo and Andres de Blas, eds., *La Transición Democratica Española* (Madrid: Editorial Sistema, 1989).

41. Gregorio Peces-Barba Martinez, *La Elaboración de la Constitución de 1978* (Madrid : Centro de Estudios Constitucionales, 1988).

42. Ramon Tamames, *Introducción a la Constitución Española: (Texto y Comentarios)* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1985).

43. Gunther *et al.*, *Spain after Franco*, *op. cit.*

44. The text of the speech is in Emilio Attard, *La Constitución por Dentro. Evocaciones del Proceso Constituyente: Valores, Derechos y Libertades* (Barcelona: Argos Vergara, 1983).

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Cortes' aspirations, desires a Constitution which grants space to our people's individuality and guarantees their historical rights."

The 1978 Constitution does not confront the national question methodically; it takes bits and pieces from the peripheral pluralistic vision (as developed in Catalonia), while retaining the older framework of a strongly-united Spain. This organicity, however, no longer entails any homogeneity, which is replaced by a new appreciation of regional differences and a supra-ethnic unitary symbol: the Monarchy. Regional differences are seen as enriching the national texture rather than threatening it, as feared by the older Francoist cadres.[45]

Yet this stress on unity rules out a "truly" federalist framework. Any possible "over-interpretation" of the 1978 Constitution as a federalist document is preempted at the very beginning. The most important point is its acknowledgment of the existence of other "nationalities" within a united and indivisible Spanish "nation." This was not easy to achieve.[46] The Right sought to sabotage its mention, dragging along many other political forces. However, both Catalan nationalists and the Communists firmly objected to dropping the term.

The Constitution's gestation period lasted sixteen months, during which time the preliminary draft passed through several committees and was the object of over a thousand amendments. Whereas compromise was achieved easily over most of the Constitution's 169 articles, "a large part of the amendments presented to the draft were directed against Article 2."[47] After long discussions, the term was retained, but not before thoroughly modifying the article in order to stress the indivisible character of Spain.[48] Jordi Solé i Tura, one of the Constitution's seven "framers," recalls Article 2 as "a veritable synthesis of all the contradictions looming during the constitution-making process. . . . It is an authentic point of encounter between different concepts of the Spanish nation."[49]

Aside from heartland "Castile" (often identified by peripheral nationalists

45. Such a malleable approach is particularly evident in the Introduction, which states that: "The Constitution is based on the indivisible unity of the Spanish nation, common and indivisible fatherland of all the Spaniards. It acknowledges and guarantees the right to autonomy of the nationalities and regions which form it and the solidarity among them." See *Constitución Española/Regulamento del Senado* (Madrid: Publicaciones del Senado, 1982), "Titulo Preliminar," Artículo 2.

46. Jordi Solé i Tura, *Nacionalidades y Nacionalismos en España. Autonomí as, Federalismo, Autodeterminación* (Madrid: Alianza, 1985), pp. 95ff.

47. Tura. *Nacionalidades y Nacionalismos, op. cit.*, p. 97.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

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as Spain *tout court*), three "historical nationalities" are usually identified within Spain: Catalonia, Euskadi (Basque Country) and Galicia. These are never mentioned explicitly in the Constitution, thereby leaving the door open to interpretations concerning the criteria for regional autonomy. The obvious trick was to extend decentralization to most other regions, thereby "relativizing" the potential impact of Basque and Catalan autonomy. The Constitution also attempted to curb possible unifying trends among the regions, which were plausible in some potentially "irredentist" areas:[50] Pan-Catalanism spoke in the name of Valencia and the Balearic Islands, while in Euskadi the question of an "irredenta" Navarre fueled the nationalist fire.[51] Present-day peripheral nationalists still complain that the creation of many regions was an attempt to break down "national unity" by gerrymandering. Yet the process has succeeded in softening the overall impact of radical nationalism. Once the constitutional project was completed, 17 "autonomous communities" emerged on the official map, some of which were entirely new creations.[52]

Among the fundamental rights solemnly proclaimed by the Spanish nation, there is the need to "protect all the Spaniards and peoples of Spain in the exercise of their human rights, their cultures, traditions, languages and institutions"[53] The nation is openly multilingual, and the defense of regional languages is mentioned explicitly.[54] Thus an important parameter

50. An important corrective concerning the possibility of inter-regional alliances was provided by Article 145: "No federation between Autonomous Communities will be permitted under any circumstances."

51. On the definition of Navarre as a "Basque Ulster," see Martin Blinkhorn, "The Basque Ulster: Navarre and the Basque Autonomy Question under the Spanish Second Republic," in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. XVII, No. 3 (1974), pp. 595-613.

52. Recently, local historians have been mobilized to confer regional dignity to these new administrative units. Not everyone is satisfied with the present status: Some regions claim a separate autonomy based on alleged historical roots. Thus some organizations in *León* wish their region to "secede" from the Autonomous Community of *Castile*.

53. *Constitución Española*, *op. cit.*, "Preambulo."

54. Conferring official legitimacy on the regionalization process, Article 3 states: "Castilian is the official language of the state. All Spaniards have the duty to know it and the right to use it. The other Spanish languages will also be official in their respective autonomous communities according to their own statutes. The richness of the distinct linguistic modalities of Spain represents a patrimony which will be the object of special respect and protection." *Ibid.*, Titulo Preliminar, Artículo 3. Linguistic pluralism is also emphasized in the item related to parliamentary control of the media: "The law shall regulate the organization and parliamentary control of the means of social communication owned by the state or any public entity and shall guarantee access to those means by significant social and political groups, respecting the pluralism of society and the various languages of Spain." *Ibid.*, Capitulo Segundo, Derechos y libertades, Artículo 20, comma 3.

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of traditional Spanish centralism was eliminated: the idea that there should be a congruence between nation, state and language, i.e., that a state should have only one language, lest its unity be threatened.[55] The term "nation" and its adjective "national" refer exclusively to Spain.[56] There is obviously some confusion with the term "Spanish nationality" when it refers in the singular to citizenship, while in the plural it is supposed to refer to regions and nationalities: "(1) Spanish nationality is acquired, preserved, and lost in accordance with provisions established by law. (2) No one of Spanish birth may be deprived of his nationality."[57] But the Spanish nation is the only subject of the constitutional process. This is achieved through the concept of popular sovereignty[58] and, in Article 1 of the Introduction, Spain is again defined in terms of the popular will.[59]

According to the Introduction, Spain is not a federal but a unitary state. However, its open character allows for considerable regional autonomy, which may result ultimately in the emergence of a federal system. This openness is assured by the fact that the Constitution can be interpreted in different ways, at least in matters related to the division of power between the central state and the regions. Openness also means that the functioning of the present system "depends almost entirely on the political will of the party in office."[60] In particular, the Senate does provide full regional representation, as is usual with federations.

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55. This can be seen as the flip side of the nationalist slogan "one language, one nation." This idea became popular with the centralizing crusade of French absolutism, subsequently reinforced by the French Revolution. It was not a product of German Romanticism, as claimed by Kedourie, Hobsbawm and others. When referring to ethnic and linguistic homogeneity as the main goal of the nation-state and to its form of centralist nationalism, it is more appropriate to speak of the French model than of the German or Eastern model. The ideal of ethnic and linguistic purity was sanctified by the creation of state institutions, at least since Cardinal Richelieu presided over the creation of the French Academy as a body to watch over the "correct" use of language.

56. On the Constitution's use of *nacional* and related terms, see Solé Tura, *Nacionalidades y Nacionalismos*, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-102.

57. *Constitución Española*, *op. cit.*, Capitulo Primero: De los españoles y los extranjeros, Artículo 11.

58. The very first words of the Preface claim: "The Spanish nation, desiring to establish justice, liberty, and security, and to promote the well-being of all its members, in the exercise of its sovereignty proclaims its will to. . ." *Ibid.*, Preambulo

59. "(1) Spain constitutes itself into a social and democratic state of law which advocates liberty, justice, equality, and political pluralism as the superior values of its legal order. (2) National sovereignty resides with the Spanish people, from whom all the powers of the state derive." *Ibid.*, Titulo Preliminar, Artículo 1.

60. Montserrat Guibernau, "Spain: A Federation in the Making?" in Graham Smith, ed., *Federalism. The Multiethnic Challenge* (New York: Longman, 1995), pp. 239-56.

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Salvador Giner and Luís Moreno identify another anti-federal feature of the Spanish Constitution: the new, greater role of the provinces as intermediate institutions between the autonomous communities and the city councils.[61] Solé i Tura argues that "the main political defeat for the supporters of the autonomies was the constitutional recognition of the provinces' continuity."[62] There are at least three problems with the permanence of provincial institutions:[63] First, they contribute to Spain's already bloated bureaucratic apparatus, often duplicating the functions of the regional governments or of municipal institutions.[64] Second, some of the autonomous communities include only one province (Asturies, the Balearic Islands, Cantabria, La Rioja, Madrid, Murcia, and Navarre) and these communities have a comparative advantage over more multi-provincial communities in, e.g., political representation and the distribution of public funds. Moreover, some of the latter are new creations lacking historical depth[65] and they are seen as the result of centralist gerrymandering. Third, most senators are elected from the provinces (by the same electoral constituency as for the deputies), despite the fact that Article 69 of the Constitution defines the Senate as "the chamber of territorial representation" meant to convey the interests of autonomous communities.

These limitations notwithstanding, the Constitution *de facto* grants self-government to autonomous communities and acknowledges regional cultures. As such, it opens the possibility for federal arrangements. Without this compromise, the conflict between those holding opposing visions concerning the country would have escalated, resulting in one of two possible outcomes: the revocation of basic democratic freedoms or the outright disintegration of the Spanish state. The timing of the constitutional change, favorable international conditions and, finally, the will of national elites to negotiate a wide range of settlements prevented either of these outcomes.

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61. Salvador Giner and Luís Moreno, "Centro y Periferia: la Dimensión Étnica de la Sociedad Española," in Salvador Giner, ed., *España* (Madrid : Espasa-Calpe, 1990), Vol. 1; and Luís Moreno, *La Federalización de España* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1997).

62. Solé Tura, *Nacionalidades y Nacionalismos*, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

63. Most contemporary Spanish provinces are the result of Javier de Burgos' administrative division in 1833.

64. However, in the Basque case, the provinces (Alava, Guipuzcoa, Navarre, Vizcaya) have a much deeper historical legitimacy and function.

65. For instance, autonomy statutes were granted to *Cantabria* (province of Santander), an area whose ancient name was *La Montaña*, and to *La Rioja* (province of Logroño), both regions culturally and historically part of Castile. *Madrid* has been detached from its historical hinterland, Castile, and established as a separate *Comunidad Autónoma* — a sort of "federal district" like Canberra, Washington, or Mexico City.

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The Road to Autonomy

Spain's 1978 Constitution cannot be understood independently of the decisive role played by Catalan and Basque nationalism in the debates preceding its approval. The experience of regional autonomy enjoyed by Catalonia under the Republic (1931-38) was often taken as a point of departure for elaborating contemporary concepts of regional autonomy. According to Robert Clark, "the Catalan example proved to be the only one of negotiation over the transfer of powers. Since the Catalan regime was the first to be developed, its powers were subject to more bargaining. Subsequent regional entities, such as the Basque General Council, would have to follow the pattern established by the Catalan Generalitat."[66] But for the nationalists, the pre-war model lacked guarantees and thus needed to be expanded.[67] That is what eventually happened.

Once approved by both Houses of Parliament (October 31, 1978), the Constitution was submitted to a popular referendum (December 6, 1978) and, with the exception of Euskadi, was accepted throughout Spain by 87.8% of the voters. Nearly all Basque nationalist forces opposed the Constitution, while the moderate PNV (Basque Nationalist Party, which had also abstained from the parliamentary vote) called for abstention.[68] The reasons for the boycott had to do with the perceived ambiguities about Basque local rights. In the ensuing referendum, the abstention rate reached 56% in the two most nationalist provinces, Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia. Such a figure shows the extent to which the Spanish state had little legitimacy in Euskadi — a situation prefiguring a further spread of violence.[69]

The next important step was to implement the Constitution's regionalist goals by creating regional self-government. Because of its long autonomist tradition preceding the Civil War, Catalonia was the obvious candidate to launch such a project. The Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia was approved in 1979, after a popular referendum in which 61% of the eligible voters cast ballots with 88% in favor. Catalonia gained an autonomous government and

66. Robert P. Clark, *The Basques: The Franco Years and Beyond* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1979), p. 349.

67. See José Antonio Gonzalez Casanova, *Federalisme i autonomia a Catalunya, 1868-1938* (Barcelona: Curial, 1974).

68. On the Basque nationalists' attitude towards the Constitution and the Statute, see George Hills, "Basque Autonomy: Will it be Enough?" in *The World Today*, Vol. 36, No 9 (1980), pp. 356-60 and Virginia Tamayo, *Genesis del Estatuto de Gernika* (Gasteiz: Herri-Arduralaritzaren Euskal Erakundea, 1988).

69. On the relation between nationalism and legitimacy, see Walker Connor, "Nationalism and political Illegitimacy," in *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* VII (Fall 1980), pp. 201-228.

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its own parliament. The Statute's charter[70] declared Catalan the "proper language" of Catalonia, although it had to share the status of "official language" with Castilian. A popular referendum also ratified the Basque Autonomy Statute in 1979, with 61% voting and 89% in favor.[71] Jesús María de Leizaola (1896-1980), President of the Basque parliament in exile, returned from France ending the 43-years-old "government in exile." In April 1980, Carlos Garaikoetxea, the PNV leader, became the first post-war head of the Basque government.[72] In short, Spain was transformed from a highly-centralized bureaucracy to a quasi-federal system, with the distinct possibility of developing a full-fledged federalism. Political commentators, as well as nationalists, rightly refrain from calling the present system a "federation," since there is considerable ambiguity concerning the regions' authority — matters which still have to be negotiated with Madrid.

As a result, independently of their relative artificiality, all autonomous communities embarked on a process of boundary-building, which included the invention of symbols, as well as the rediscovery of regional cultures. Since 1978, the system of autonomous communities has inspired the formation of new regional parties, often compelling state-level parties to adapt locally by at least regionalizing their names. It also has stimulated research in local history, anthropology, economy and culture in general. Once regions such as Cantabria and La Rioja were created, their institutions encouraged a variety of endeavors in all aspects of regional culture. The result of these efforts has been a vast systematization of local knowledge,[73]

70. Generalitat, "1979 Estatut d'Autonomia de Catalunya," leaflet published by the Generalitat de Catalunya.

71. J. A. Ayestaran *et al.*, *Euskadi y el Estatuto de Autonomia* (San Sebastián: Erein, D.L., 1979).

72. See Manu Escudero and Javier Villanueva, *La Autonomía del País Vasco desde el Pasado al Futuro* (San Sebastián: Txertoa, 1976). On Navarre's Constitutional history, see Valentin Vazquez de Prada *et al.*, *Cuestiones de Historia Moderna y Contemporanea de Navarra* (Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1986).

73. Each community now has its own encyclopedia, often supported by regional funds. Thus there are now: a *Gran Enciclopedia Extremeña* (10 vols. — 1989-1992) ; a *Enciclopedia de La Rioja* (4 vols. — 1983); a *Gran Enciclopedia de Cantabria* (8 vols. — 1985); a *Gran Enciclopedia de Andalucía* (10 vols. — 1979); a *Gran Enciclopedia Valenciana* (11 vols. — 1990-1991); a *Gran Enciclopedia Asturiana* (17 vols. — 1981); a *Gran Enciclopedia Aragonesa* (14 vols.); a *Gran Enciclopedia Navarra* (11 vols. — 1990); a *Gran Enciclopedia de Madrid, Castilla-La Mancha* (12 vols. — 1982-1988); an unfinished *Gran Enciclopedia Canaria* (3 vols. — 1994-1995); and an incomplete *Gran Enciclopedia de la Región de Murcia* (1991-1995). The regionalist efforts were also indebted to the *Enciclopedia General Ilustrada del País Vasco* (28 vols. — 1978) and the *Gran Enciclopedia Gallega* (26 vols. — 1974). All of these projects were conceived on the model of their most illustrious prototype and precursor: the *Gran Enciclopèdia Catalana* — a 25 volume project begun in 1969 under the direction of Jordi Carbonell and completed in 1993.

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comprehensive reference works and book series. Municipal and regional historians have been most active in this enterprise. In some regions, grassroots philologists have sought to locate archaic lexicons, to revitalize lost languages and even invent new ones.[74]

Where language is not the distinctive regional element, other aspects of local culture have received institutional support. Yet often the revival has been spontaneous and local artists have had to endure dire economic conditions to survive. Thus, while the Andalusian government has promoted theater, literature and flamenco music, most of the thriving new flamenco scene emerged spontaneously in Gypsy communities outside institutional structures. Encouraged by the existence of regional governments, all regions have engaged in cultural revival and community-building. Yet regions (as opposed to nationalities) still have difficulties and hesitate to regard themselves as cohesive and distinct communities, while Basque, Catalan and Galician identity remain unchallanged.[75]

But for some the process of devolution had gone too far. Provoked by rapid democratization and regional autonomy, as well as ETA's assassinations, the most conservative elements in the military tried to end it altogether. On February 23, 1981, a plenary session of Parliament was interrupted by a group of Civil Guards led by Colonel Antonio Tejero, who seized the assembly and held the MPs prisoner for over a day. Only the King's timely intervention prevented the attempted coup from turning into an open military revolt. This affair, however, has had some long-lasting consequences and has managed to halt for a while further regional devolution. In a move meant to pacify the "bunker" and to silence rumors of a more serious *coup d'état*, Madrid drafted a basic law allegedly to "harmonize" the devolution process. Its tacit aim was to curtail the powers of the

74. Among the latter, the "Cantabrian language," supposedly spoken in the region before Castilianization, has not gained popularity. Attempts to revive the "Fabla Aragonesa," still spoken in a few Aragonese Pyrenean valleys, have met with mixed success. More successful has been the case of Asturian (nicknamed babble), spoken by less than 300,000 people and made co-official in the "Principate" of Asturies. The language is actively promoted by the Department of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth, through its "Language Policy Unit." It has been systematized by the Asturian Language Academy and it is supported by movements such as the "Junta" for the Defense of the Language. There are parallel efforts in the northern areas of Leon, where an *asturiano-lleonés* variant (also known as *asturianu de Lleón* or *asturleonés*) is spoken.

75. Constitutionally, all autonomous communities have the same rights as the Basque Country and Catalonia. Whatever policies they may pursue, however, it will be difficult to develop suddenly the kind of distinctive culture the nationalities have developed over a long period of time.

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two main autonomous communities, Catalonia and Euskadi, by standardizing the political authority and representation of each community. Its proposal in 1982 triggered vigorous popular protest from most of the opposition. Eventually, in August 1983, the proposed law was withdrawn.[76]

In the 1982 general elections, the Socialist Party won an absolute majority in Madrid's Parliament, crowning the transition process. From then to April 1996, for 14 years Spain was ruled by a Socialist government.

Conclusions

Under the pressure of powerful popular movements, post-Francoist Spain has been transformed from a centralized into a largely decentralized entity. A crucial aspect of this restructuring dealt with ethnic conflict, which in the case of the Basque Country, had taken a violent turn. In Spain, as elsewhere, state nationalism was based on an organic concept of the nation, often expressed in the concept of "unity of fate."[77] Spanish nationalism, in turn, engendered reactive movements in the "periphery," specifically Basque, Catalan and Galician nationalisms. The new vision of Spanishness that emerged during the transition is radically different from the previous organic idea. The effort to build a new inclusive national identity was behind the entire democratization process. Under pressure from increasing minority mobilization, Madrid's elites had to find a new medicine for the old disease. The earlier federalist tradition provided a good background, but it needed to be cleansed of its Republicanism and adapted to the new challenges, such as gaining admission to the European Community. The EC provided a supplementary and overarching identity, diminishing the importance of state boundaries.[78] The

76. In addition to all Basque and Catalan nationalists, the law also was opposed by the Communists and the Andalusian regionalists. The law had been agreed on by the PSOE and UCD. For a legislative assessment of the law and of Spanish decentralization in general, see Hurst Hannum, *Autonomy, Sovereignty, and Self-Determination. The Accommodation of Conflicting Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), pp. 263-79.

77. This holistic vision was very similar to the early Basque nationalist idea, even though the envisioned country was conceived as a free confederation of seven provinces. In the earliest stages, the province of Bizkaia (Vizcaya) may have played a central, but never a centralist role.

78. As is known, many of the EC's founding fathers, such as Jean Monnet, saw regionalism as a means of defusing nationalist tensions. See Douglas Brinkley and Clifford Hackett, eds., *Jean Monnet: The Path to European Unity* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991). For a regionalist reading of Monnet, see François Fontaine, *Plus Loin avec Jean Monnet* (Lausanne: Fondation Jean Monnet pour l'Europe/Centre de Recherches Européennes, 1983).

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Monarchy became the ideal vehicle for the aspirations of a changing society, while embracing the different identities of Spain's various peoples. In this context, the King functioned as a kind of "steerer of change."[79]

The 1978 Constitution is the watershed event of this change, since it fully recognizes and even dignifies the "right to difference." It is a masterwork of political negotiation and balance between opposing trends. However, a quick reading of the Constitution reveals that the organic vision is never fully abandoned, despite the fact that homogenization is definitely gone. Perhaps, in some unique way, the 1978 Spanish Constitution blends unity and pluralism, allowing the implementation of quasi-federal principles.[80] Unlike federal constitutions, it stresses the unity of the state. Yet, like most federal constitutions, the working assumption is that social peace cannot be achieved through majority rule, but only by accommodating minority aspirations.

In its most intolerant fashion, Spanish nationalism historically has provoked antagonistic responses, as local elites opposed centralization and assimilation attempts.[81] Basque, Catalan and, to a lesser extent, Galician nationalism are all reactions to Madrid's past failure to accommodate regional elites. Pure coercion has never been an effective tool of nation-building. Nearly everywhere, state repression has only superficially and provisionally ended ethnic dissent. More likely, it has unleashed powerful separatist forces difficult to stop. The recent breakup of multinational states held together by decades of one-party rule indicates that, in the long run, coercion cannot succeed as a tool of conflict management. Because of the historical failure of Spain's attempts at centralization, a more pluralistic vision of Spanishness has emerged, inspired by an earlier federalist tradition. While the new Spain has sought to accommodate ethnic aspirations, deeply rooted memories of earlier oppression linger. The centralist legacy led to some cultural assimilation, which only recently has been halted or even reversed.

Conflict management is not conflict resolution. A constant process of negotiation is imperative for conflict management to succeed.

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79. Charles T. Powell, *El Piloto del Cambio: El Rey, la Monarquia y la Transición a la Democracia* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1991).

80. Graham Smith recognizes that it is often difficult to distinguish unitary states from federations. See Graham Smith, "Mapping the Federal Condition: Ideology, Political Practice and Social Justice," in Graham Smith, ed., *Federalism: The Multiethnic Challenge* (London/New York: Longman, 1995), p. 7.

81. Juan J. Linz, "Early State-building and Late Peripheral Nationalism against the State: the Case of Spain," in S. N. Eisenstadt and Stein Rokkan, eds., *Building States and Nations* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1973), Vol. 2, pp. 32-116.

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Whereas a "definitive" solution often may remain unattainable, conflict management can succeed only in a democratic context, where elites are free to express their programs and goals.[82] This implies that the state has to de-ethnicize itself, i.e., it has to drop its exclusivist stress on a single ethnic group or national culture. A de-ethnicized state is the opposite of a nation-state because it becomes the vehicle for the aspirations of all its constituent ethnic groups rather than imposing its own ethnicity on them.[83] Franco's Spain could be defined as an "ethnic state" insofar as it sought to be an organic entity where only one culture and language was allowed. In contrast, democratic Spain has gone through a process of de-ethnicization as the original emphasis on monoculturalism has been dropped.

Spain's de-ethnicization can be compared favorably to several cases where the state has instead (slowly or abruptly) assumed an ethnic form. The paradigmatic example is post-Titoist Yugoslavia. Its dissolution has shown that the most dangerous prospect for multi-ethnic states is the emergence of exclusivist forms of nationalism at the center. Before its constituent republics even began thinking about secession (and long before they were internationally recognized) Yugoslavia was destroyed by Serbian nationalism. The date of the breakup is often put at 1989, when Slobodan Milosevic abolished Kosovo's and Vojvodina's provincial autonomy, triggering vigorous protest in all other republics. Occasionally, the date of the breakup has been shifted to 1987, when Milosevic gained power as President of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia, and even to 1986, when the major Serbian intellectuals in the Serbian Academy of Arts and Science launched a "Memorandum" rife with xenophobic statements, although they were well concealed behind a veil of unitarism and even anti-nationalism. As Noel Malcolm notes, "the fundamental argument of the Memorandum was that the 'Serb people' throughout Yugoslavia was a kind of primary entity, possessing a unitary set of claims and rights which transcended any mere political or geographical division. . . . It was the pursuit of that 'integrity' which would eventually destroy Yugoslavia."[84]

82. Victor M. Perez-Díaz, *The Return of Civil Society. The Emergence of Democratic Spain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

83. See Pierre Van Der Berghe, "Denationalizing the State," in *Society* (January/February 1996), pp. 64-8; and "The Modern State: Nation Builder or Nation Killer?" in *International Journal of Group Tensions*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 1992, pp. 191-208.

84. Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), p. 207.

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In his work on conflict management, Louis Kriesberg distinguishes accommodation from de-escalation.[85] Accommodation occurs when some form of cohabitation or coexistence is reached before the conflict escalates into violence. De-escalation occurs instead after a climax of violence has been reached. Typically, with de-escalation a terrorist movement reduces or even abandons armed struggle. Both cases can be found in Spain and in Europe generally.[86]

A more arbitrary distinction is between low-intensity and high-intensity conflict.[87] This depends on the level of mass participation to the nationalist movements, rather than on the distinction between violent and non-violent conflicts. There are also different patterns occurring within the same state. Spain had to deal with different conflicts at the same time, one of which involved a widespread use of terrorism. The Spanish elites have done so by restructuring the whole state and achieving a balance between centralizing and separatist trends. Both accommodation and de-escalation have occurred within the constitution-drafting framework. Several problems were tackled simultaneously through the drafting of a new Constitution which granted unprecedented power to dissenting regions. Thus what Spain has also provided is a model of constitution-making.

Democratic institutions turned out to be crucial means in dealing with the conflict. The dictatorship had exhausted itself, but no accommodation could have been reached if free speech and voting rights had not been restored. Also important was the lack of irredentist pressures. Although

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85. See Louis Kriesberg and Stuart Thorson, eds., *Timing the De-escalation of International Conflicts* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1991).

86. A case of *accommodation* in Europe is that of the Åaland Islands, where the conflict has subsided and a *modus vivendi* has been reached between the Swedish-speaking community and Finland. An instance of *de-escalation* is South Tyrol, Italy, where terrorist groups dissolved and the conflict became manageable after a violent phase in the early 1960s, although tensions remain between the Italian far Right and regional autonomists. On South Tyrol, see Rudolf Joó, "South-Tyrol: From Violent Conflict to Inter-ethnic Coexistence" (unpublished paper, 1997).

87. The two concepts should be kept distinct from those of *low-* and *high-intensity warfare*, which relate to war between states rather than insurgency within a state. See Michael T. Klare, Peter Kornbluh, eds., *Low Intensity Warfare: Counterinsurgency, Proinsurgency, and Antiterrorism in the Eighties* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988). Conflicts can also be *acute* or *latent*, depending on the degree of mass mobilization. A typical case of low-intensity conflict is the autonomist movement on the island of Madeira (Portugal), and the more important one in the Azores, which demanded autonomy in the aftermath of the collapse of the Portuguese dictatorship (1975). See Luis Andrade *et al. Congresso I Centenario da Autonomia dos Açores: Actas* (Ponta Delgada, Azores: Jornal de Cultura, 1995), 5 Vols. See especially Vol. 2, "A autonomia no Plano Socio-cultural."

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both Catalan and Basque nationalists claim to have brethren in France, their numbers are not significant enough to influence either movement.[88] Moreover, the Catalan and Basque regions in France are economically "underdeveloped," traditionally lacking a strong, endogenous, nationalist movement and depending heavily on Paris for economic assistance.

Since ethno-national conflicts can be managed only through a process of continuous negotiation, national conflicts in Spain are not solved forever. With a change of regime or new socio-economic upheavals, conflicts may re-emerge. Yet, through a long process of negotiation, a potentially-explosive conflict has been defused. Most importantly, the Spanish state has acquired a new legitimacy among broader sectors of the population — a legitimacy which it did not enjoy at the beginning of the transition period. Thus the Spanish experience of dealing with ethno-national conflicts provides a model for other political elites. It should be particularly illuminating for those states trying to dismantle decades of centralized administration.

88. Of course, the *international* context has to be taken into account. Thus it has been difficult for India to reach any accommodation with Kashmiri nationalists because of the belief that Pakistan was behind the fast growth of Kashmiri militancy and that any concession to the militants would result in concessions to Pakistan. Similarly, Sri Lanka's governments usually have been cautious about accommodations with the Tamil insurgents, not simply because of the level of military violence but also because of the perceived threat of being "swallowed up" by India. As the Palestinian and Irish cases show, however, some compromise can be reached even in a problematic international context.

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Academic Deception for Fun and Profit

Robert Weissberg

Outside of the technical fields — the hard sciences, engineering, and perhaps a few other dauting disciplines — much of what transpires in today's university can be likened to Soviet consumer production at its most bizarre: huge resources are allocated to achieve a most paltry, shoddy result and, when the payoffs deteriorate further, even larger sums are committed and outcomes falsified. Judged by conventional investment standards — maximize returns from scarce resources — the entire project is in shambles. Virtually anyone who has taught at the college level for twenty-five years or more will confirm that the dumbing down of higher education is not a catchy media-invented phrase.

Nowhere is this intellectual quality issue more evident than higher education's commitment to "process" poorly prepared African-American students, sparing no expense with every possible manipulation of the rules. Getting more and more black students into college is sacred dogma within the education establishment. Yet, as is plain to all those familiar with today's university life, this masive outreach has a peculiar, almost surealist character. To be blunt, these sought after students, often stridently threatening to gain entrance "by any means necessary," are typically the least inclined to partake of academics. Many barely attend classes and must be prodded to complete Mickey Mouse assignments; the more articulate proclaim traditional learning (the very purpose of college) as a form of cultural oppression. Their grades are typically dismal, despite grade inflation certifying "B" the minimally acceptable mark. Clearly, decades of race-based exclusion have not generated a thirst for learning, or at least the erudition provided by institutions of higher education.

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This unfortunate situation seldom draws attention, despite its conspicuous wastefulness. Some blissfully deny the reality of nonsuccess altogether. For a few, high drop out rates and other academic deficiencies among blacks are hardly troublesome; they merely constitute yet one more outcropping of society's permanent, deep-seated racism. Others take a longer perspective — what is a few decades of disappointment measured against a quest that may take a half century? As in WWII, initial defeats will soon give way to triumphs. The kindest accounts simply dismiss shortcomings as inept efforts slightly out of control: universities are trying their heartfelt best but, given the problem's enormity, are still bumbling around. After all, universities must do "something." Everything helps. Anyway, this society is rich enough to afford it, even if largely wasteful.

These kindly spins all dodge an awkward, embarrassing reality. Stripped of all the high-sounding rhetoric, higher education is being used to manage cosmetically (and relatively cheaply) deep and festering racial cleavages. There is a happy, though profoundly evil marriage of convenience here. We are now facing the legacy of 1960s black social disintegration— illegitimacy, soaring crime and drug use, and all the other traits now associated with underclass behavior. Resolving these racially tinged problems has proven dauting and, under present condtions, solutions may lie beyond our reach. Nevertheless, in a society where "more education" is the mindless default answer to virtually every quandary, marching black youngsters off to college is powerfully alluring.

The key term is "manage," not "solve," as in "bread and circuses management." In lieu of genuine learning to overcome perplexities, unsophisticated students are permitted to play-act Joe College in feelgood curriculums. Rather than confront a harsh reality, better to hire some $85,000 a year cliché-spewing charlatans to demonstrate "commitment" to correcting injustices. One is reminded of the old joke of the drunk searching under the lightpost for his lost car keys only because the ground there was better lit. Progress is thus superficial, appearing in doctored selective statistics, Potemkin programs, and in vacuous speeches served up by artful administrators to placate "concerned" black activists. "Consumer fraud" may be a more apt description of what is being perpetrated.

Outwardly, black insistence regarding university admission mimics the passions of other ethnic groups famous for their love of learning, e.g., Jews and Asians. No list of non-negotiable African-American ultimatums lacks the perfunctory provision for doubling or tripling minority (meaning black) enrollment. The "body count" is a fixation, and expansion is to be

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accomplished immediately, regardless of unfriendly realities. The common objective is 15% or better representation at Harvard, Yale, MIT, Stanford — all the way down to Podunk U., including all professional schools.

Anything seemingly impeding this quest is fiercely denounced. Civil rights organizations never tire of bashing standardized tests as racist plots preventing black educational advancement. No amount of evidence, even horrendous black drop-out rates, can convince the faithful that low test scores predict future performance. Black legislators are equally resolute, using their growing budgetary clout, that colleges make their admission policies more generous. If told that the pool of qualified black candidates is exhausted, white administrators are glibly informed by defenders of the faith: "find more." Abolishing preferential acceptance guidelines, as was recently done by the California Board of Regents, or rolling back other educational set-a-sides, inspires grim Holocaust comparisons. Every decline in black college admissions, no matter how slight, is believed to be a first step backwards toward Jim Crow.

So alluring is this quest for "a college education," that almost any questionable commodity is willingly bought. Ideologically tinged, flattering self-study fields — Black Studies, The African-American Experience, Inner-city Studies — are only the most notable outcroppings. Less visible, but equally pernicious, is the easy acceptance of remedial offerings as the genuine article (and even many non-remedial classes are *de facto* remedial). The recent New York City higher education system uproar over high school level instruction in college illustrates this acceptance of bogus learning — enemies of remedial course-work are accused of "depriving" minorities of a "college" education. One could also add the commonplace practice of allowing substantial transfer credit from dubious academic institutions. Thus, the University of Illinois-Urbana permits one quarter of one's university credits to be taken at local community colleges renown for their "nobody-can-fail" policies.

Aiding and abetting this diploma crusade is an entire army of well-paid administrators, counselors, tutors, role models, mentors, and other helpers all dedicated to pushing their clients through. Again, shades of Soviet-style "make the numbers whatever the cost" mentality. This production activity is invisible to outsiders, and even faculty dealing with black students may only dimly grasp what is being "accomplished." Some of it is straightforward advising — helping troubled students avoid "killer courses" and tough grading instructors. Other components are customized student assistance programs, everything from culturally attuned writing

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centers to Offices of Minority Computing for would-be black engineers and scientists. Most consequential and well-hidden are those petty bureaucrats on a sacred mission to "rescue" the truly bewildered. Occasionally, students mysteriously flee certain failure, even on the eve of finals, thanks to some concealed administrative *deus ex machina.* Indeed, one ex-student was permitted to graduate when allowed to drop a failed course *three years* after receiving an "F." Topping all this off are a cadre of "sensitive" instructors, always willing to give black students the benefit of the doubt so as to benevolently assist racial progress.

This mismatch between pushing thousands of ill-prepared, unmotivated conscripts off to the Great War on Ignorance, and the paltry results is hardly cost-free. The down-the-drain monetary waste is only the beginning. Larger social opportunity costs of replacing decent (usually white and Asian) with less competent students are similarly sizable. Ultimately, more consequential is the corruption of academic life that accompanies this quest. Much of this intellectual decline is so gradual that it might not even be noticeable on a yearly basis. The watering down of instruction, so as not to fail disproportionately unqualified black students, avoiding "sensitive" yet highly germane material to escape controversy, hiring marginal black faculty to inspire and service fresh recruits, and cluttering the curriculum with ersatz "relevance" (and easy grades) are obvious examples.

There is also the distracting strife that inevitably results when black students with inflated senses of intellectual worth confront unexpected academic failure — the outcries of racism and demands for further institutional corruptions to secure "fairness." Beyond these financial and campus-related costs are the multitudinous political burdens, especially the resentment from whites and Asians, who see their honest efforts disregarded by schools pursuing ideological agendas. Add, too, the further — and ultimately pointless — squandering of moral capital by blacks, and the false stigmatization of those who legitimately deserve admission.

Can this lemming-like situation, in which armies of young African-Americans, aided and abetted by their supposedly wiser leaders, enthusiastically marching off to predictable non-performance be justified? Do black leaders, like those infamous WWI generals, believe that massive frontal assault can eventually succeed, despite horrendous causalities, given ample time and bountiful cannon fodder? Since this topic stirs deep emotions, it is necessary to be more explicit. It is not the case that higher education as such is pointless for all blacks. No doubt, many reap the full benefits of university life. Innate ability is far less the issue than the colossal mismatch

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between individual endowment and academic requirements. The issue is pushing the unqualified to where they do not yet deserve to be. There are no comprehensive figures for this mismatch, but they must be substantial — in the many thousands — given that the average SAT difference between blacks and whites at prestige schools is 180 points. The paradox occurs, because blacks demand (and whites, for their own nefarious reasons, concur) that even those African-Americans lacking the ability and inclination to perform satisfactorily at a given school should be accepted anyhow. Rather than admit blacks to schools where success is predictable, the clamor is to grant admittance to "better" institutions, despite dismal odds of accomplishment. A "C-" in Princeton's African-American Studies Department thus represents greater "progress" than a "B+" in Business Administration at Iowa State. This would be true, even if most black Princetonians fell by the wayside and nearly all flourished at Iowa.

Several facile justifications for this quest easily suggest themselves but none survives close scrutiny. Defenses are more like slogans than cost-benefit calculations. Consider the "fair share" argument — if, for example, blacks comprise 13% of California's population, they deserve 13% of the places at UCLA, Cal Tech, and so on. This almost transpired in 1991 when the "Education Equity Act" nearly became California law. Though undoubtedly vaguely popular, the argument pertains only to admission and graduation, absolutely nothing else. It is academically content-free and divorced from any measurable benefits. Proportionality defenders seem totally unconcerned with what occurs in-between coming and going. Advocates remain unbothered if black studdens disproportionately flock to easier, less lucrative fields, such as education and the laudatory self-study cources. One might even guess that, if every African-American student graduated with a "C-" in Leisure Studies (a *bone fide* field), this would be a certified triumph.

What about the connection between education and income? Are blacks not simply embracing the venerable and uncontroversial adage that the sure path to prosperity is through college? Through a perfect public relations stratagem, the connection is, predictably, empirically far from self-evident. In the first place, even if this education-income nexus were absolutely valid, it is a dubious strategy, at least for the immediate future. The well-documented deficiencies of pre-college academic preparation among African-Americans cannot be ovecome by generous college admission standards, and universities are hardly the place to repeat high school and become college educated. A student with a 4th grade reading

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level does not come out of college with a 16th grade reading level. One only has to look at CCNY open admissions policy to see that college cannot be both high school and college.

Nor is it possible to contend that large numbers of potential black beneficiaries of college await undiscovered by college recruiters. Stories abound of so-so talented black high school graduates being beseiged with lucrative offers, while many colleges will admit just about anyone. To continue to compel prestige colleges to "admit more" is a futile clamor. Consider some simple statistics to appreciate this dilemma. In 1960, 8.1% of whites had completed four years of college; the comparable figure for blacks was 3.1%. By 1995, a year in which colleges competed for blacks with a vengeance, the corresponding figures were 24.0 and 13.2.[1] This figure has remained fairly constant during the last decade. In other words, it would take a *doubling* of the number of black graduates to achieve racial equality. Further relaxation of admission criteria inescapably means dipping further down into an already questionable talent pool. How black enrollment — let alone graduation — is to be expanded without abolishing standards altogether remains unclear.

Evidence regarding the disjuncture between education and income surfaces when income differences among graduates are scrutinized. The wages of educational slackness are lower wages. From the BA to the doctorate, whites out-earn blacks with identical degrees.[2] This occurs despite many employers' over-recruiting and over-paying blacks to avoid litigation or to satisfy non-economic community relations objectives. Without legal incentives, this discrepancy might be much larger. Clearly, snap degrees in education, ethnic studies and ideologically comforting social sciences are not financially equivalent to more demanding majors in biology, engineering, or business. For talented blacks, education does pay handsome dividends, but sending unprepared dummies — black or white — to college for ersatz coursework is economically pointless. Save for future professional athletes, rounding up undisciplined, unqualified blacks with vigorous outreach programs yields minuscule returns on investment.

A far better case could be made that less glamorous vocational education, taken seriously, could yield far higher returns. Black plumbers outearn those with unfinished, watered-down, ideology-laden sociology degrees. People will pay for repaired faucets; few will finance a garbled lecture on "oppression." One might also add that often university attainment

1. *US Statistical Abstract 1996-97* table 241.
2. *US Statistical Abstract 1996-97* table 244.

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has been a result of inter-generational economic advancement, not its cause. All and all, the infatuation with pushing more black youngsters towards higher education is not rooted in a rational economic calculus, especially if huge opportunity costs and political divisiveness are added to the equation.

A variation on this theme is that prestige higher education still represents the best available, albeit rocky, path to long-term collective progress. A disappointing handful of today's successes justifies a multitude of failures and, ultimately, the statistics will improve. Struggling students in Inner-City Studies should not be compared to Asians conquering physics but to cohorts still on the streets. Even an Ivy League failure is a step in the right direction, given past deprivations. This argument, to continue the warfare metaphor, might be likened to the USSR's initial WWII strategy — huge short-term causalities are bearable to buy needed time for the future. To wit, today's ill-prepared, first-wave drop-outs clear the path for tomorrow's motivated scholars: the current paradox is illusory; it merely represents a faltering and momentary first step on a long march.

If this argument of progressive improvement were correct, one could expect some modest progress over the last three decades. Clueless pioneers from the 60s, struggling to adapt to a foreign world, should have been replaced by savvy youngsters more familiar with the ropes. Similarly, by now counselors should have learned from innumerable earlier failures. Unfortunately, outcomes speak otherwise: blacks continue to struggle, despite billions in remedial programs, armies of advisors, and good-faith ingenuity. Invoking "education is the answer" (at least education as presently constituted) has become an appeal to wish, not a depiction of reality. If anything, given growing administrative pressure to manufacture "graduates" via grade inflation, the proliferation of remedial yet full-credit courses, customized majors, and other "make the numbers" devices, the situation may be deteriorating.

Perhaps the push for numbers rests on narrower self-interest: higher education conveniently serves as a honey pot for many middle-class blacks, and their employment requires hoards of marginal students. The paradox reflects well-disguised public works pork, no different in principle from supporting half-empty but locally valuable VA hospitals in the name of worthy veterans. The remedial staff, special admissions officers and other "facilitators" can all be counted on to denounce "arbitrary" admission criteria as racist. No doubt, some truth resides here, but this narrow economic self-interest hardly accounts for the tenacious passion surrounding college admissions. Cutting back on college admissions generates much

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more intense emotion than abolishing comparable economic benefit programs, e.g., reducing government set-a-sides for minority contractors, though the sums may be comparable. College admissions are mysteriously special, even sacred. Not even the public debate over Aid For Dependent Children, an issue of considerable financial significance for many blacks, generates the outrage surrounding college admissions cutbacks. Insisting young black mothers seek menial work inspires less indignity than informing black legislators that the freshman once admitted to Berkeley must now face the humiliation of attending San Francisco State.

Coldly calculating costs and benefits come up short as an explanation for this craving for degrees. That some blacks benefit is not proof of worthiness, if one includes both the full range of expenses (especially all the failures) and, most importantly, the opportunity forgone of pursuing a theraputic education versus something more productive. Unraveling this paradox requires moving beyond cold facts and figures or the rhetoric of entitlement. Fundamentally, this "push them in where they do not belong" strategy is a marriage of political convenience; an unholy bargain, so to speak. On the one side, are naive black youngsters, plus a scattering of would-be professors and administrators seeking economic advancement via higher education. Meanwhile, on the other side, there are whites who see this misguided craving as a golden opportunity to solve a major problem on the cheap. This marketing of a false Messiah is a terrible deal for blacks, though in the short-run it satisfies certain crass yearnings, while being a fantastic deal for a system that refuses to confront harsh realities.

Why are African-Americans easy prey for the enticements of higher education, even when concrete rewards are not forthcoming? Much of this lure derives from how many blacks have come to misconstrue "education." Properly understood, education implies acquiring certain knowledge and skills. It is distinct from schooling — time spent in an institutional setting whose purpose is learning. The academic affirmation of this achievement, especially the diploma, conveniently reflects attainment beyond immediate direct observation. In principle, and this is so widely understood that it seldom has to be explained, a college diploma (and similar formalities) and education may well exist independently. To wit, a brilliantly educated person may have eschewed bureaucratic paper work or may be self-taught. Paper credentials merely perform labor saving tasks necessitated by modern society; they are not the educational equivalents of passbook savings account balances. Only nitwits take seriously mail-order diplomas or similar empty formal proclamations of learning. Ultimately,

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one's education must be revealed by accomplishment — speaking foreign languages, solving a calculus problem — not displaying a certificate.

Education as learning and education as a certificate can easily be conflated. When done intentionally, this is usually a matter of administrative utility, e.g., federal civil rights law defines "literacy" as a sixth grade education, so as to ban impossible-to-pass literacy tests. No doubt, there are many illiterate high school graduates, but for crude administrative purposes, this forced identity is acceptable. A firm might require all perspective job applicants to have electrical engineering degrees, but no savvy employer exclusively relies on pieces of paper. After all, knowledge can be antiquated, despite prestigious credentials, the degree can be forged, or signify electrical engineering taught by charlatans. Simply put, paper certification is not substance.

Among those unfamiliar with higher education, regardless of race, a tendency exists to equate substantive learning with paper credentials. Competence is not proven via visible accomplishments; it is demonstrated by possessing a document proclaiming "competence." Bureaucratic manipulation creates reality. Predictably, then, warnings of dire consequences from taking bogus courses, effortless sliding through, and otherwise disdaining serious work falls on deaf ears. That institutions of higher learning would issue valueless degrees is as unthinkable as the government issuing counterfeit currency. Pushed further, political pressure can bestow "learning"and convert the unqualified into the qualified. Hence, why bother with strenuous tedium if the degree, in and of itself, no matter how obtained, magically bestows all the advantages? If one has the degree, competence is tangibly certified.

A second critical element in this duplicitous marketing strategy is misrepresenting what a "good school" means. Again, as with the peddling of phony cure-alls to the desperate, the gullible willingly cooperate with the ruse. Correctly understood, a "good school" is an institution characterized by students' superior intellectual attainment. Students distinguish themselves by academic proficiency, entry into prestigious professions, worldly accomplishment, or similar noteworthiness. Good schools provide excellent education, i.e., considerable learning. Conflating a "good school" with an intellectually unaccomplished student body is a contradiction. Such an incongruity can only be accomplished via administrative quackery, e.g., awarding bogus merit certificates to the undeserving. Impressive physical character or past reputation, in and of itself, cannot proclaim excellence: such visible features are epiphenomenal, performing

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only a catalytic role in producing quality education. High technology and handsome buildings may constantly produce failures, while squalid facilities could justifiably enjoy worldwide acclaim for outstanding intellectual accomplishment. It is not a question of monetary investment *per se*. The relation between financial generosity and scholarly excellence is complex: lavish funding for showplace facilities often results in continuing attainment, rather than initially causing it.

"Good schools" are seldom sausage-like machines, in which the worst students emerge as stellar hot dogs, regardless of ingredients fed into the grinder. Facilities count for something, but their independent contribution is limited: under-achieving but talented students may eventually flourish in inspiring settings, but rarely can this transformation mechanically succeed with large groups of less gifted pupils. The experience of Kansas City's court-ordered billion dollar school experiment, plus innumerable similar failed adventures (including Washington DC's well-funded fiasco) speak to this point. Conversely, tales of once superb urban places of learning sinking into wastelands, despite staff continuity, increased budgets, or unchanged buildings are as commonplace as population shifts. To believe that extravagant physical environments or plethoras of award winning teachers or personal computers everywhere can metamorphose people into scholars carries physical determinism to magical levels. If this were true, education problems would have long vanished.

Unfortunately, innumerable blacks predictably impute transformational power to impressive physical facilities, especially famous universities with picturesque campuses. Not unexpectedly, white boosters everywhere are perfectly willing to encourage, or at least not challenge, such exaggeration. Indeed, this logic seems to be an article of faith among some federal judges — just build the grand edifices and the geniuses will come. For believers in this awesome power, touring Harvard or Yale must be akin to visiting a giant hi-tech industrial metal compactor capable of transforming an entire car into a tiny metal cube. If world famous professors grumbled about their modest influence over students, this would not be credible. After all, the rejoinder goes, if eminent professors possess so little sway, how are all the illustrious institutional accomplishments to be explained? Surely, these majestic places of enlightenment can perform wonders, as is conspicuously authenticated by wealthy whites clamoring to have their children admitted. One "receives" a first-rate education at an exceptional school like one can find a superior diamond ring at Tiffany's.

This deep confusion regarding the meaning of "good schools" can be

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seen in attempts to equate educational performance with physical conditions. This faulty analysis among blacks is hardly original — it is straight social science ideology as expounded by leading academic education "experts." It is not uncommon to hear troubled, unmotivated college students with awful work habits blaming their "bad high schools." Their sorry academic condition, it would seem, flows from uncontrollable external factors.Their meager performances merely reflect past environmental deficiencies. One cannot learn, after all, if the roof leaks, the paint chips, or from old books. Educational excellence is a physical property of schools, not pupils. No doubt, every student at a "bad school," no matter how onerous their own behavior, may voice the same opinion. They are but passive victims of dismal physical, violent conditions. If this "victimized" student were asked about superior performances by students elsewhere, the likely explanation would be that "better schools" were responsible. When further pressed to define the essence of these superior schools, the response would again stress easily discernible external conditions: handsome buildings, "better" textbooks, fancier labs, cutting-edge computers, etc. Perhaps this explains the mesmerizing attraction for integrated schools. If only blacks attended the "good" schools whites now attend they, too, would turn out like whites. That similar wondrous facilities at inner-city schools fail is easily explained: facilities have quickly fallen into physical disrepair and been engulfed by vandalism, and are thus no longer "good." The critical human elements in this equation — motivation, parental pressure, work habits, ability — escape attention. That many Catholic schools possessing antiquated, worn-down physical facilities nevertheless have splendid records of accomplishment is dismissed as irrelevant.

It is no wonder, then, that the desire to attend "a good school" (defined by outward manifestations) so overpowers the educationally uninformed. For a struggling youngster better suited to trade school, denying access to "good schools" superficially appears no different from a first-rate hospital rejecting a sick person. Indeed, a garbled "logic" dictates that the worse the disease, the greater the need for stellar medical facilities. Or, the steeper the climb to educational proficiency, the greater the necessity for the wondrous institutional capabilities. That "the best" may in grim reality yield a "bad" education, due to a mismatch between poor preparation and intellectual requirements, is not only unfathomable, but smacks of legendary white attempts to deny blacks their fair-share privileges.

This distorted, mechanistic appreciation of "good schools" has the added comforting benefit of absolving distressed students from individual

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responsibility. There can be no personal deficiency, if education is totally a matter of what the school can accomplish. No doubt, in the minds of many "lucky" enough to have gained undeserved entry, to attend a first rate school and fail resembles purchasing a lemon Lexus. If MIT produces the best and the brightest, and if one's MIT sojourn is catastrophic, perhaps one should sue for false advertising. Better yet, harass the administration to honor its outstanding quality reputation. Or, if MIT admits that its efforts have failed, as with Toyota conceding a faulty Lexus, insist that the guarantee be respected. Pour in more resources — perhaps a black engineering department or cultural center — to make MIT a truly outstanding school. In short, good schools, given their well-displayed extraordinary nature, can perform miracles if they really so wished. That is why they are "good schools."

The third element explaining why so many blacks are easily attracted to higher education as the miracle cure, concerns how "opportunity" is grasped, as in "admission to Harvard is an opportunity." Again, this is less a "black thing" than a trait characteristic of many unfamiliar with university life. Ordinarily, "an opportunity" implies *possible* gain. The key here is possibility, for the outcome is uncertain; costs are inherent. Betting parlors offer splendid "opportunities" to convert modest life savings into huge fortunes. There are many high-risk "opportunities," from embezzlement to dangerous, but well-paid professions. Fortunately, most people react cautiously if strangers offer unsolicited grand "opportunities" to make millions.

When African-Americans speak of "educational opportunity," however, notions of risk and adversity seemingly dissipate. The concept "opportunity" here apparently conveys a generous, no strings-attached gift. In a sense, for academically unprepared black students to discover that they have won admission to a top school might resemble winning the tax-free lottery. The reality is that this "gift" might prove the educational equivalent of a White Elephant — a hopeless struggle resulting in endless wasted hours. If opportunity costs are included, the gift opportunity's true costs may be immense: two years squandered at Cornell could have been spent pursuing a genuine education at Ithaca College.

Not surprisingly, misconstruals of "opportunity" often emanate from the schools' deceitful machinations. To make minority "numbers," ambitious recruiters paint idyllic pictures for potential students who, in reality, are wasting their efforts. As with star high school athletes, unsophisticated potential enrollees are enticed to campus, told of special tutoring, comfortable "theme" residences, and similar lures with scant mention of

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risk. Add the attraction of social life and the magical income-generating diploma, and it is no wonder that this chancy "opportunity" is irresistible.

This is hardly a flattering picture of African Americans, when it comes to seeking the rewards of education. They grossly exaggerate the value of certification apart from academic content, impute wondrous, almost mechanical ameliorative capacity to institutions, and minimize risk. Yet, none of this should come as a great surprise, given the limited experience many blacks have with universities. It would be unrealistic to expect much more. No doubt, many early 20th century American immigrants shared similar odd fantasies. One can easily imagine impoverished Lower East Side Jews conflating a "learned appearance" with genuine erudition, while their Italian neighbors were awestruck by those who could recite Homer by heart. They, too, would have mistakenly imputed magical powers to schools, if they wandered on to the Harvard campus.

To complete this account, however, another set of observations must be added: the need for whites in positions of influence to manage black aspirations and, failing that, to handle the resultant anger and possible disruption. Needless to say, this is an incredibly vexing problem, extending well beyond mere resource commitment. Indeed, at least for the immediate future, and within the context of democratic governance, no solution may be feasible. Yet, to do nothing, to lapse into what Daniel Patrick Moynihan has called "benign neglect" is politically unacceptable. What then? The hard choices are scarcely appealing.

For one, acknowledging the problem's truly daunting nature is fraught with potentially unpleasant confrontation. Many of those still in power are deeply implemented, due to their social engineering schemes gone terribly wrong. By contrast, hiding is easy; everyone is fashionably doing it. Indeed, like the old-fashioned sexual double standard, the charade has been elevated to an honored convention. Its artful execution is celebrated — dazzling speeches exhorting more blacks to attend college, when it is well-known that many are but clueless canon fodder. A lack of courage and tolerance for deception infects *all* sides. What public official is willing to openly tell Jesse Jackson that only a relative handful of blacks are to be admitted to the best colleges until more are ready for admission? Would Jackson agree, adding "Who needs drop-outs and graduates in Remedial Studies?" What Deans want to abolish their university's vast dependency bureaucracy, on the legitimate grounds that college is a poor substitute for high school? Which instructor is anxious to inform some angry black student leader that incoherent babble about

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some ill-defined "oppression" is an unacceptable literary style?

Not only is avoidance psychologically painless, but it can be financially rewarding to those in power, who can arrange the "make-the-numbers" theatrical presentations. College administrators with a knack for "minority recruiting" are highly sought after and well-compensated. Among their envious *apparatchiki* peers, these are the true "Heroes of Production." To peek below the surface and inquire whether recruits learn anything of value, whether black faculty are true academics, not rabble-rousers in remission, whether all the well-publicized conferences on African-American themes are anything but eating and drinking festivals is to risk being labeled a racist. And down deep, nobody on campus really cares, since everything is "over there." Academic life elsewhere is wholly untouched by manufacturing Potemkin-like departments.

Moreover, consigning blacks into feel-good, intellectually dishonest ghettos is incredibly cheap by university standards. If, perchance, times are tough financially, ample outside funds can always be solicited successfully. Even the most grossly over-paid rabble-rouser *qua* professor gets paid a fraction of what a decent law or business school professor earns. A "cultural center" can be built with chump change compared to anything in the hard sciences. Particularly at major research universities dependent on federal grants, a million or two on "diversity" helps keep tens of millions flowing into fields that really count intellectually. Even turning loose functional illiterates can hardly damage the university's reputation, provided that everyone else is doing the same, and this is all that is expected. One might even surmise that the entire deceitful enterprise costs less than the insurance bill, and psychologically may be treated as a sub-category of such a budgetary category.

The most evil "benefit" of all this is that it intensifies dependency. Perhaps "domesticated" might be a more apt expression. Over-matched black students quickly grow accustomed to surviving only due to a specialized infrastructure designed to insure their survival. The Assistant Dean of Minority Students replaces friends and family as the source of advice. Hectoring government for "more financial commitment" replaces the acquisition of marketable skills. Clamoring for affirmative action replaces building an attractive resumé. In a sense, black students are learning habits contrary to the very principles of liberal education — education for a free person. They are being educated as future clients of state bureaucracies.

Given grim alternatives, i.e., really educating ghetto recruits, it is easy to see the attractiveness of the present "managed solution." For the

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reasonable accommodationist, seeking social peace at virtually any price is a no- brainer. The recipe is simple. Start with those woefully unsophisticated about higher education, willing to believe all the hype PR flacks can concoct. Like those cheerful but clueless parents taking the official college dog-and-pony tour, they will accept on faith what savvy academics know to be dubious. Add a healthy measure of opportunistic white administrators, unbothered about sending ill-prepared youngsters to bogus fields populated by the blind leading the blind. Sprinkle in some handsome perquisites for adroit diversity mavens, hire some under-qualified black "professors," avoid awkward subjects, and amply spread about grand sugar-coated rhetoric regarding "progress." Wrap it all up in a society that is incredibly rich, and is far more anxiety-ridden over anger becoming violent than youngsters getting a genuine education. Bake for ten years, and denounce as racist anyone who finds the dish distasteful. Serves one entire nation.

In short, for decades there has been a problem not unlike General Motors during the 1960s and 70s being plagued by defect-ridden, badly designed cars. Building superior automobiles is hugely expensive and attempting to do so would bring innumerable unpleasant realities to the surface. In the case of General Motors, this disagreeable element was a lethargic, clumsy and insular corporate culture. Their response, it will be remembered, was to substitute the desceptive "Mark of Excellence" advertising campaign. In the case of providing education to African-Americans, the catalogue would fill volumes and be quite discomforting for *all* parties. There is no need to review the record of accomplishment — it is terrible! At best, peace has been kept by providing illusions to the gullible. Management is the operative term. If a war crimes-like tribunal were held for "offense against black children," the defendants would probably number in the tens of thousands and be among the most diverse cast of characters ever assembled. In a phrase, what transpires is a form of benign, even cooperative corruption. Yet, all parties seem satisfied, despite endless troubles everywhere.

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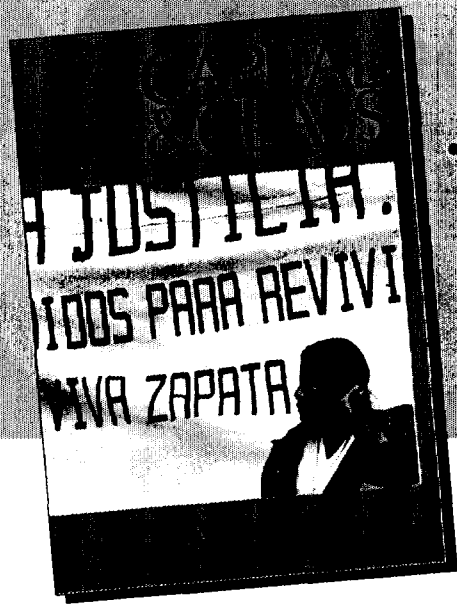

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Reviews:

Rethinking the Self

Christopher Gill, *Personality in Greek Epic, Tragedy; and Philosophy: The Self in Dialogue* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

Recently there have been strong reactions against the Enlightenment idea of the self, originating with Descartes, as a unitary "I" defined as wholly self-legislating and self-identical. It has become commonplace to stress the dialogic disposition of the self and affirm not only the social dimension of selfhood, but also its ineradicable embodiment. Of course, taken too far, such a view can reduce the self to a mere play of impersonal material forces or temporal flows; such is the "postmodern" self envisaged by Gilles Deleuze, who sought to rid subjectivity of all forms of interiority, coherence, integrity and consistency. It is an irony, perhaps, that when certain branches of philosophy stress that the self is but a cipher for the play of forces, it becomes peculiarly *determined* as such, and, being emptied of all specificity and contingency, becomes but the reverse side of an ideal or unitary and all-too-Cartesian ego. It is in the context of this debate that the question arises whether there can be a self that is neither a unitary "I" nor a fulcrum of discontinuous flows, but a particular self, though not totalized as such. To this end, there has been a tendency to reach back before the Enlightenment to look for alternative resources for articulating notions of selfhood within the Western tradition, and in particular to classical antiquity. These writers, however, often locate in Plato an anticipation of the modern self, and in particular a modern dualism of soul and body. But Plato's thought in fact challenges modern construals of the self.

A fine example of this new rapprochement of classical philosophy is Gill's book on *Personality in Greek Epic*. Particularly inspired by the functionalist or mechanistic account of consciousness articulated by Daniel Dennett, who has popularized a materialist approach (pp. 43-44), Gill reproaches Homer and Plato, among others, in order to free them from the charge of primitiveness levelled at them by such influential Hegelian speculators as Bruno Snell and A. W. H. Adkins, who have espoused the "evolutionary" or "developmental" view of selfhood (and for whom the normative self is represented by the self-present Cartesian ego). He shows how the self in dialogue is a fundamental structuring principle of Greek notions of personality, and that its essential reciprocity underlies all ethical decision-making processes in the Homeric epics, Attic tragedies, and Hellenistic philosophy. He also correctly stresses the relation between this notion of the self and a culture predominantly formed by the oral tradition (p. 17).

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Gill is primarily concerned with elucidating his theme by reference to indirect sources, namely deliberation monologues in Homeric epics, and decision-making scenes in tragedies where representations of inner dialogues and other expositions of motivation reveal an interpersonal ordering of selfhood. His emphasis on the dialogic concept of the self in these episodes is an important correction of an imbalance, chiefly because its uncovering of a certain parity between recent philosophical notions of the self and ancient ones rectifies those readings that have tended to see ancient understandings of personality as inadequate. If, however, one considers more direct sources, i.e., ancient statements pertaining to selfhood as such (e.g., what is said of the *psuche* and *daimonia*), certain dialectical nuances emerge, which simultaneously complicate as they confirm much that Gill has observed.

While it is crucial to stress the primarily communal or collective aspirations that form the ancient notions of the self, one should be cautious of suggesting that there is only one kind of selfhood throughout the history of classical and Hellenistic literature. There are significant divergences in concepts of the self, say, between the Homeric and Pythagorean-Platonic traditions, even if they presuppose a certain dialogism and objective participation. There is evidence to the effect that, while the Homeric hero does dialogue with himself, there is nonetheless a certain individualism discernible in Homeric notions of heroic selfhood, though this is by no means to suggest that Homer was a proto-Cartesian celebrant of unitary consciousness. Similarly, the crucial role of *psuche* in Platonic philosophy could be seen as anticipating contemporary notions of the uniqueness of selfhood as well as a certain strain of interiority,[1] though this is not an attempt to read Descartes back into Plato. Thus, while philosophical investigations, such as those of Dennett, illumunate ideas of consciousness in ancient thought, their deployment should not obscure the fact that one cannot speak univocally of "consciousness," "selfhood," or "personality" in the case of Homer or Plato, or throughout the ancient world, though in each case for different reasons. Rather, to speak of selfhood in antiquity is to refer to a labyrinth of traditions, often overlapping, and always obscure, but informed by substantive mythic and theological notions that Gill tends to overlook in his philosophical glosses of the indirect evidence.[2] While it is impossible to unravel these traditions in any exhaustive fashion, some effort must be made in this direction. For if one leans too heavily on recent functionalist analyses of consciousness, there is a serious risk of being ahistorical. Can one really speak of ancient concepts of selfhood in functionalist or mechanistic terms? Even if one

1. Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Aspects de la Personne dans la Religion Grecque," in *Mythe et Pensée chez les Grecs: Etudes de Psychologie Historique* (Paris: Francois Maspero, 1965), pp. 267-282.

2. See, e.g., M. Detienne, *De La Pensée Religieuse a la Pensée Philosophique: La Notion de Daimon dans le Pythagorisme Ancien* (Paris: Société d'Edition "Les Belles Lettres": 1963); David B. Claus, *Toward the Soul: An Inquiry into the Meaning of* psuche *before Plato* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

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applauds Gill for his rejection of Cartesian and Hegelian notions of personality, does it follow that the Greeks must universally share that view of the self espoused by the functionalists (even if one can be certain that the latter are not themselves Cartesian)? Does Gill's dichotomy of concepts of selfhood, subjective-individualist (Cartesian) versus objective-participant (Dennettian), really exhaust the matter?

Gill's thesis must be supplemented with a series of complications. The first concerns his dichotomy of concepts of the self just mentioned. One slight danger of this dichotomy is that it is too narrow a reading of Descartes' notion of the self. An alternative reading of the Cartesian ego suggests that, after all, the poles of Gill's dichotomy risk collapsing into one another.[3] While the philosophical self or unitary subjectivity in Descartes' *Discourse on Method* alone remains indubitably "given," the fact that it cannot be ascribed any positive quality is significant. What matters is neither its memory nor any other content, but rather its *formal consistency*. This means that the subject's emptiness is dialectically identical with a kind of objectivity. The Cartesian self is only indubitable because it has been emptied of particularity by its definition as pure thought, and by being abstracted from its specific modes of existence. The subject is the most certain thing there is because it is the superlative object, whose existence is a void and is thereby ideally unconstrained either by place or time.[4] Thus, one cannot speak of the Cartesian self solely in terms of radical subjectivity. It also has an objective dimension, so objective in fact that it eradicates the division between the individual and the universal. The Cartesian self is objective to the extent that it cannot be contradicted. While Descartes' mathesis is identified with the private (since the subject arrives at certain knowledge by deducing from its own existence, so it is uncertain as to whether its truth will pertain to others);[5] it is also deemed universal. How can something so ineradicably private also be universal? Is it because the Cartesian individual is so emptied of specificity? Or, because the individual is all there is, is the individual paradoxically one and the same with the universal? It is perhaps impossible to say which comes first on this construal, the individual or the universal, since the supreme individual is he who surveys the universal totality, while the universal is in turn simply what is surveyable by a single unitary gaze. Whatever the solution to the aporia of subjectivity in Descartes, pure objectivity is the other side of Cartesian subjectivity. Consequently, to suggest that the ancient Greeks thought of their personal situations in wholly "externalist" terms is to continue to project upon them a certain Cartesianism. For "sheer" externality is itself only what remains to face a pure interiority. None of this is to deny, however, the

3. See Christopher Gill, "Is There a Concept of Person in Greek Philosophy?" in Stephen Everson, ed., *Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 166-93.

4. Descartes, "Rules for the Direction of the Mind," in The *Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, tr. by John Cottingham *et al.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), Rule Four, X378-9ff. See also Catherine J. Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), pp. 57-74.

5. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

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importance of the dialogic or interpersonal in ancient construals of the self. It is simply to raise a caveat about the terminology of "objective" and "external."

The second complication concerns the degree to which all notions of a developing selfhood in ancient Greece should be rejected. One can agree with Gill in rejecting "evolutionism," Hegelian or otherwise, in which there is an advance from a primitive to a more refined concept of selfhood, always latent. One can also agree that the ancient Greeks never subscribed to anything like a Cartesian or a Kantian self. But it is difficult to overlook the evidence adduced by Meyerson, Momigliano and others, which shows that Greek law developed in the direction of a sharper sense of individual responsibility.[6] For example, it gradually came to be accepted that a human being could be held accountable in ways that an inanimate object or animal could not. In earlier times, these also had been subject to legal accusation, in a period when having criminal instinct was seen as being possessed by demonic force, as something contagious and so difficult to locate that it would best be dealt with by religious purification. In this context, Gill finds the subjectivity of tragic heroes in this archaic period; hence one may doubt whether, as he says, the audience is supposed to sympathize with the "reasons" of, say, Nedea, as opposed to experiencing again the irrational forces moving her and so purging themselves of those lingering ancient powers (as Aristotle's *Poetics* seems to indicate) (p. 216ff).

It was suggested that notions of personality in ancient Greece were more divergent than might at first be imagined. Regarding this third complication, one can begin by looking at certain aspects of the Homeric construals of selfhood in order to consider the possibility of alternative traditions. Gill understands Homeric selfhood to be "unified by (its) interaction, constructed either by external dialogue itself, or else by the internalization of dialogue to form the basis of its reasoning," and cites the several instances in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of "inner dialogue."[7] In addition, the Homeric self is, for Gill, essentially motivated by interpersonal considerations such as the restoration and maintenance of "co-operative relationships" or reciprocal kinship bonds where these have been interrupted (p. 125). Gill argues that Achilles' speech in *Iliad* 9 shows that his anger toward Agamemnon is provoked not by an individualism which refuses to participate in the common cause of the Danaans,[8] but rather by Agamemnon's own *breach* of commonality.

6. Ignace Everson, *Problèmes de la Personne* (Paris: Mouton, La Haye, 1973); Arnaldo Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

7. "The deliberative monologues represent an . . . internalization of the interpersonal discourse which is central to the modes of living presented in the poem" (p. 54).

8. ". . . existing interpretations of this type ascribe to Achilles an inappropriate kind of second-order reasoning. They presuppose that Achilles' reasoning centers on the kind of individual self-realization discussed . . . in connection with Butcher and Nietzsche; that is, they characterize Achilles' 'heroism' in terms of late Romantic conceptions of heroism" (p. 118).

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The latter's seizure of Briseis, according to Gill's interpretation of Achilles' speech, has ruptured the relation of "generalized reciprocity" to such a degree that it cannot be restored by the compensatory offering of gifts (pp.124-154).

While it is possible to claim, with Gill, that the Homeric hero engages in dialogic activity, whether outer or inner, and embodies communal and interpersonal standards, a closer examination of these standards reveals a surprising parity with certain forms of "modern" competitive individualism. The "essential principles of co-operative nobility" in the Homeric world, which Gill contrasts with the protocols of "some private and self-related ethic," (p. 152) represent a relatively late stage in the development of gift-exchange practices. As Adorno and Horkheimer have pointed out, the Homeric gift is not at all a freely-offered interpersonal love-token, but a proto-Hobbesian insurance against violence. The gift stands very close to an instrument of barter, intended to pay for forfeited blood and, moreover, operates according to the principle of equivalence: "actually or symbolically the host receives the equivalent value of his effort."[9] So while the maintenance of reciprocal exchanges may form the basis of ethical decisions in Homer, this may be a sign, not of a thoroughly pre-modern mentality, but rather the inception of the "modern" individualist spirit, for which the maintenance of the equilibrium of exchange is a crucial principle in sustaining an enforced peace due to the breakdown of less self-centered social structures.[10]

Even if one were to discount these possible inklings of individualism in Homeric gift-exchange practices, one can still discern an element of individualism in Achilles' anger that does not fit too easily in Gill's polarities. In response to Phoiniu's plea that he receive Agamemnon's compensatory gifts as a hero ought,[11] Achilles asserts that he has no need of the honor conferred on heroes by their acceptance of gifts, for he has been honored with superior ordinances — those of Zeus himself.[12] Not only is Achilles above the protocols of ordinary gift-exchange; he is also *beneath* them: he "has made savage the proud-hearted spirit within his body."[13] Ajax notes Achilles' position outside these protocols when he cites far more extreme cases of renunciation, which were resolved through the acceptance of compensatory gifts. His point is that there is no offence that cannot be appeased for a price.[14] It follows that Achilles is motivated by an individualism which refuses to be incorporated within customary interpersonal codes. But why should he? He is not an ordinary mortal and has never been socialized in the manner of other human beings.

9. Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "Odysseus or Myth and Enlightenment," in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, tr. by John Cumming (London and New York: Verso, 1992), p. 49.

10. James Redfield, "Le Sentiment Homerique du Moi," in *Le Genre Humain* 12 (1985), pp. 93-111.

11. *Iliad*, 9.515-605.

12. *Iliad*, 9.605-8.

13. *Iliad*, 9.629.

14. *Iliad*, 9.630-643.

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In *Iliad* 24, when Achilles is again abusing co-operative codes of society by brutalizing Hector's corpse and stubbornly refusing to restore his body to Priam, Hera cries out to Apollo that while Hector was mortal, and suckled at the breast of a woman, "Achilles is the child of a goddess."[15] He is formed by the impress of the self-legislating whimsicality peculiar to the progeny of Olympus.

Had Gill looked elsewhere, i.e., beyond the realm of a character's reasoning for acting in a certain way, to more metaphysical considerations of selfhood, he might have found it easier to defend Achilles. There is more to be said than simply that Achilles behaves individualistically because he is the child of a goddess. If one looks at certain instances of "inner dialogue" in Homeric epic, or the references to a division of affective forces within the self, the conclusion that these are a sign of the internalization of a formative dialogism in antiquity does not explain their significance. For one thing, Gill overlooks his instances of representations of inner dialogue in the Homeric poems are often literary contrivances to maintain dramatic suspense. For another, Achilles concurs with all that Phoinix and Ajax have said,"[y]et still the heart (*kradie)* in me swells up in anger."[16] This battle between reason and passion is not simply a formal device, but a more ontological signal that the self is formed at the moment of the collision of these forces.[17]

What this collision of forces implies about the self in Homer is rather ambiguous. On the one hand, it testifies to an emergent rational individualism, which places a premium upon the repression of passion by reason, and, by extension, the domination of nature by humans. Moreover, the apparent rationalized autonomy of these forces, along with others such as *phrenes*, *thumos, stethos, etor, menos,* and *noos*, suggests a degree of interiority and "unity in multiplicity" in Homeric notions of selfhood — particularly when *logos* triumphs over *thumos, menos* and *epithumia*.[18] When a character in Homeric epic is possessed from without, either by a passionate force or by a god or goddess, and is thrown into inner deliberation, the personality of that character remains stable. Indeed, the characters are often delimited by condensed epithets which, although varying in accordance with the hexameter rhythm, are fixed and unavailable to substitution between individual characters. Thus, Achilles is swift-footed, Hector has a shining helmet, Diomedes

15. *Iliad,* 24.55-60.

16. *Iliad,* 9.646.

17. Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Die Heimkehr des Odysseus: neue homerische Untersuchungen* (1927), 3rd edition (Zurich: Weidemann, 1988), p. 189. With reference to a similar passage in *Odyssey* 20, Adorno and Horkheimer note that, where Odysseus rebukes his heart for rising in fury against the women visiting the suitors at night, "the self — *autos* — is not spoken of until verse 24, once the repression of instinct by reason has succeeded. If the choice and sequence of words are to be taken as conclusive, the indentical 'I' of Homer could be seen as primarily the result of a mastery of nature carried out within the individual." *Op.cit.*, p. 47, n. 5.

18. See Ruth Padel, *In and Out of the Mind: Greek Images of the Tragic Self* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Universty Press, 1992), pp. 44-7; B. Snell, *The Discovery of Mind*, tr. by T. G. Rosenmeyer (New York: Dover, 1960), p. 5.

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is good at the war cry, and Odysseus is both cunning and much-enduring, but Achilles is never much-enduring, nor Odysseus swift-footed, and so on.[19] The Homeric hero's character tends not to exceed these generalized and immanent identifications: his swift-footedness, bronze-claddedness, or plume-crestedness does not so much illumine, as envelop him. He is consistently identified as exceptional or unique in terms of his terrestrial actions on the battlefield. Although a character may be subject to circumstantial alteration — such as when possessed by a god or goddess — he is never "out of character." When Athena turns her attention to Diomedes in *Iliad* 5, she does not so much alter his characteristics as *intensify* their sameness. Moreover, divine intervention in the Homeric poems does not contribute any "otherness" to the proceedings because the gods are not genuinely other-worldly. The world of the gods has its own history of thefts, deceits, cuckoldries, murders and whimsical interventions, in which only Zeus seems to occupy a position without earthly parallel. Even his considerable mystery and withdrawal do not contribute a genuine, contagious transcendence, for, from within his Olympian enclosure, his interventions can be immanently rationalized in the form of messages conveyed by Iris, Dream and Rumor, or else by the articulate and legible communications of thunder-claps, animal entrails, or the flight-path of a bird.[20]

On the other hand, the prescience of the forces that possess characters in the Homeric poems suggests that heroic motivations are more complex than simply the outcome of logical deductions or reasoning. The hero's selfhood is as much or more the result of possession by ineluctable forces, than a reflexive source of its own capacities (p. 197); it arises not as something one is, but as something by which one is possessed. This confirms and adds a further dimension to Gill's analysis of objectivity in the formation of the self during the Homeric period.

In focussing on the Homeric "inner dialogues," Gill illustrates the way in which, for the Greeks, there was no sense that the essence of thought is in conscious willing, but that their unconscious inner deliberations testify to a selfhood hovering halfway between conscious judgment, on the one hand, and pure pulsion or instinct, on the other (pp. 58-9). Would "unconsciousness" have featured in Homer's psychological repertoire? Moreover, Gill seems to confuse the issue of whether the Greeks had a concept of the will (they probably did not, at least in today's sense of the word)[21] with the issue of conscious interiority. While "decision" appears for Homer to have been the outcome of the interplay of the conflicting forces of passion and reason arising from within and without, this outcome was nonetheless fully *manifest* as a conscious awareness and appropriation of responsible selfhood. But the fact that

19. D. H. F. Gray, "Homeric Epithets for Things," in *The Language and Background of Homer: Some Recent Studies* (Cambridge: Heffers, 1964), pp 55-67.

20. See also Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, tr. by William R. Trask (Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1953), p. 13.

21. Vernant, "Intimations of the Will in Greek Tragedy," in Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, eds., *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, tr. by Janet Lloyd (New York: Zone Books, 1990), pp. 49-84.

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Gill looks for his evidence of the character of selfhood in Homer in passages apparently recording inner deliberation (though this appearance may be misleading) rather than in passages about their external behavior suggests that he *does* associate consciousness, in a Cartesian fashion, with the deliberate exercise of will and choice.

One problem with Gill's exclusive concentration upon dialogue as the key characteristic of orality is that it tends to disregard other crucial features of an oral culture: in particular, its peculiar relation to the past and reliance on myth and non-identical repetition for the constitution of memory. Lack of attention to mythic background means that Gill accords no place to the different mythic assumptions in Homer, as compared with the assumptions of the Pythagorean-Platonic traditions. Once one has investigated these mythical traditions, it becomes less easy to tell any evolutionary story according to which Homer represents a more archaic and collective phase, and Plato, a more modern and individualistic one. However, this avoidance of evolutionism fits Gill's wider approach (p. 16, n. 45).

What are the main differences between the Homeric and Pythagorean-Platonic traditions pertaining to notions of selfhood? The Homeric self is not coterminous with the immortal soul, the latter being a passive miniature or double (*eidolon*) of the embodied self (this contrasts with soul as material "life-breath" which is dispersed into a number of forces throughout the body).[22] Rather, the self — the *achieved* self — is the outcome of the interplay of various forces and seized opportunities during life. Nevertheless, despite these multiple sources of the Homeric self, it is located unambiguously at this juncture which constitutes the individual. In Plato, however, the self has become the *psuche*: "What constitutes each of us is nothing other than the soul. . . . The being which is in truth each of us, and which we call the immortal soul, goes away after death to join the other Gods";[23] one might think that this betokens an increase in interiority and clear location of the self. This *psuche*, however, is intimately linked to the notion of *daimon* or something which takes possession of the individual from without, in order to constitute him as an individual. This tradition of *daimon* and *psuche* derives from an alternative mythic genealogy as ancient, and perhaps more ancient than the mythic background invoked by Homer.[24]

In different ways, neither Homer nor Plato think of the self as simply a Cartesian subjectivity. Instead, in both cases, selfhood is linked to a kind of movement: in Homer's case, an heroic attainment in the course of conflict; in Plato's case, possession from above and *ekstasis* to the above. The differences between these two concepts of motion precipitating selfhood are clarified if one realizes that these

22. The *eidolon* of Antikleia, Odysseus' mother, and that of Patroklos, Achilles' friend, are "entirely like" these two beings. *Odyssey*, 11. 153-221 and *Iliad*, 23. 65-108.

23. Plato, *Laws*, 954a6-b4; "What I myself am is this Socrates who converses with you not that other Socrates whose body will soon be before your eyes" (*Phaedo*, 115c-d). See also *Republic*, 5.469d.

24. J.-P. Vernant, "*Psuche:* Simulacrum of the Body or Image of the Divine?" in *idem., Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp.186-192; Detienne, *La Notion de Daimon*, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-8, 98.

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are also contrasting *sacrificial* motions. For the idea of a selfhood linked to movement suggests a selfhood that has to be gained, and therefore gained at a price.

The heroic stakes are high. Beyond all mundane considerations within the city, what identifies the hero is his extraordinariness, his exceptional prowess on the battlefield and his attainment of a unique honor. And yet, his sacrificial exchange amounts to an exact equivalence, since he forfeits ordinary life within the city only in order to gain a place in the city's collective memory. Moreover, the attributes for which the heroes are remembered are various manifestations of *arete* — a supremely this-worldly qualification that receives its acclaim only in terms appropriate to the city.[25] Furthermore, by pressing to the outermost the logic of these civic values, the hero in fact confers a glory upon those social virtues, although they have now been sublimated and immortalized by the ordeal of death.[26] This attainment of individuality is not one that the hero himself can enjoy,[27] which points to an objective form of individualism in Homer that might supplement Gill's terminology.

A very different concept of the self and the soul emerges from the tradition of the philosophical-religious sects of the Pythagoreans and Orphics, linked to the use of spiritual exercises designed to purify the soul and hence liberate it from its successive reincarnations. The soul is still spoken of in terms of an *eidolon*, but it is no longer the miniature image or *phasma* of the dead person. Rather, though spiritual and not material, it is the vital force of each person in his or her own life.[28]

Only with Plato, however, is the inversion of values most fully realized.[29] Although the *psuche* is truly Socrates, this is not to suggest that the soul is in any sense exhausted by its measure of his selfhood. The *psuche* is a *daimon* in us — a divine force which radically exceeds our selfhood. The status of the living body has therefore undergone a profound transformation: it now becomes a mere appearance, an illusory image of what we ourselves truly and always are: "For each of us the body is only the image of resemblance which accompanies the soul."[30] The soul is no longer a miniature replica of the body now reduced to ashes on a funeral pyre.[31] Rather, it is "the corpses of those who are dead (which) are the *eidola* of the deceased."[32] It follows, then, that the individual soul does not supply a person's mundane psychological dimensions, but rather the aspiration of an individual self to exceed itself, or to recollect its eternal soul. So, while the proximity between selfhood and *psuche* is very close in Plato, in some ways the soul is infinitely distant and does not belong to the individual in the manner of a

25. Detienne, *op. cit.*, p. 98.
26. Vernant, "The Individual Within the City-State," *op. cit.*, pp. 318-333.
27. Indeed, the word used for the death of the hero in battle in Pindar and elsewhere is "*sphagein*" or "whole offering."
28. Vernant, "*Psuche. . .*" *op. cit.*, p. 190.
29. Detienne, *La Notion de Daimon, op. cit.*, pp. 57-9.
30. *Laws*, 959bl.
31. Detienne, *La Notion de Daimon*, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-1.
32. *Laws*, 959b2-3.

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possession, for it is transcendent, and it will leave the body upon death and be reincarnated in another body, if it is not purified and released from the cycles of metempsychosis altogether.[33] In fact, the goal of the philosopher's life is precisely this: to practice dialectic so that the soul can be purified and gathered from its dispersal in the body, and thence to escape the succession of reincarnations.[34] In contrast to the achievements of the hero's life, won in order to return to, and affirm the limits of the city, the philosopher's life is lived in order to suspend the limits of the mundane world and its ordinary appearances. In some ways, as Dumont has shown, this has parallels with the Eastern paradigm of selfhood, in which true individuality is attained only when earthly social values have been left behind.[35]

The above account of the inversion of soul and body in the Socratic tradition seems, on one level, to share a parallel structure with that of the Homeric tradition, for in both cases the aim is to turn away from the civic, and attain exceptional selfhood beyond this world. However, as Gill stresses, Socratic dialectic is a "shared search" (p. 284), for one must indeed pass through the cave before one can reach the sun-like Form of the Good (pp. 16 and 287). Nonetheless, the standards to which dialectic appeals are not simply the communal and interpersonal, as Gill seems to suggest, for these rely on the Form of the Good and the other Ideas for their condition of possibility. The process of dialectical questioning and answering is only able to reach its conclusions because of the extra-dialectical which, for all its dialogic dimension, includes a maieutic moment. Although the mediations of beauty through the physical universe and public education play an important role in the middle to later Platonic dialogues in triggering the soul's memory of the Good, there is a sense in which the Good is less essentially mediated by its historical epiphanies as compared with the vital role of apostolic and later historical testimony and the *corpus mysticum* in Augustinian Christian notions of the constitution of selfhood.

The question of the mediations of the Good through the phenomenal realm in the Platonic dialogues remains crucial, and reveals new dimensions of the link between the attainment of selfhood and sacrifice. A close examination of references to physicality in the *Phaedo* shows that, whereas for Homer, attainment of selfhood involves a sacrificial renunciation of incorporated life for the sake of posthumous acclaim within the city, for Plato, the philosopher must still perform

33. In the *Republic*, the reason for "constructing a city in speech" (369c) is in order to discern the nature of justice on a larger scale than would have been possible if one considered justice in the soul. Socrates says that to consider the soul is akin to squinting at little letters from far off, while to regard the city is to look at the same letters, only much larger and closer to hand. While his injunction to "know thyself" might suggest that the soul is nearest of all to oneself, to the contrary, the soul is further away than the city.

34. Detienne, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-9, 64. See also Plato, *Timaeus*, 90a-c.

35. Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus* (Paris: P.U.F., 1966); *and* "De L'Individu hors du Monde a l'Individu dans le Monde," in *Essais* sur *L'Individualisme* (Paris: P.U.F., 1983), pp. 33-67. See also John G. Gunnell, *Political Philosophy and Time: Plato and the Origins of Political Vision* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987), p. 40.

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a kind of sacrifice within life, but of an entirely different order. For his sacrifice is to delay the renunciation of incorporated life, or forfeit an immediate supra-worldly attainment of the Good by the disembodied soul. Contrary to what one might expect, unlike the sacrifice of the Homeric hero, the philosopher's renunciation is not a purely privative form of sacrifice, for the phenomenal realm plays a significant part in the soul's attainment of the Good.

The abundance of references to physical detail, particularly of Socrates' own bodily positions during his final hours, does not of course suggest that the physical realm has superseded the psuchical, nor that the material is all there is.[36] Indeed, Socrates makes explicit that one should not be distracted by the merely "physical," lest the souls become trapped in the immanent cycle of reincarnations and imprisonment in the body.[37] On the other hand, one should not seek to escape the body altogether *via suicide*.[38] Life is a gift from the gods, and to seek to free oneself from embodiment prematurely cannot be done except by an act of impiety. Instead, Socrates suggests a middle way — a different approach to physicality, neither materialistic nor nihilistically ascetic. First of all, the physical, if approached correctly via the exercise of *phronesis* and its concomitant preparations, can be appreciated most fully and yet without becoming an end in itself. The paradox here is that the materialist approach, which sees physicality as the sum of all reality, reduces that realm to a condition of givenness, devoid of surprise, and subject to wearing out and decay, whereas Socrates' metaphysical convictions allow him to see inexhaustible value as continuously manifest in the physical realm. If one is able to presuppose, with Socrates, that physical appearances are in excess of themselves, that they do not exhaust the real, the material realm is allowed an inexhaustible depth, and thereby to be more fully itself.

So, the realm of the physical, far from being inimical to the life of philosophy, can in fact participate in it. The first clue to this effect is the way in which Socrates' calm physical composure actually serves to dispel the fear of his companions in the face of their imminent bereavement. For fear in the face of death is seen as a non-philosophical attitude: "a man who has really spent his life in philosophy is naturally of good courage when he is to die, and has strong hopes that when he is dead he will attain the greatest blessings in that other land."[39] Similarly, the philosopher's moderation in physical matters is not driven by *fears* of any kind — neither of poverty, loss, dishonor, nor disgrace. This is simply because they know that something far greater awaits them, as Socrates makes explicit with reference to his own situation.[40] For it is precisely this moment of death for which the philosopher's whole life has been a preparation, Philosophy is indeed said to be the practice of

36. See also Nino Langiulli, "On the Location of Socrates' Feet," in *Telos* 96 (Summer 1993), pp. 143-147.
37. *Phaedo,* 81d-e; 83c-d.
38. *Phaedo*, 62a-c.
39. *Phaedo*, 63e-64a; 67e-68a.
40. *Phaedo*, 82b-d.

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dying. Socrates here notes the absurd contradictions in the bravery of heroes in the face of death; such bravery is predicated upon a prior weakness, driven by fear or cowardice. The heroes and those who face death with a self-indulgent restraint operate according to cheapened virtues, which simply exchange pleasures for pleasures, fears for fears, "as if they were coins." The only worthy coinage, Socrates explains, is *phronesis* or wisdom, which offers a kind of purification from worldliness and enables the philosopher to see beyond ordinary appearances.[41]

The details of Socrates' physical disposition, therefore, mediate to others his psychic preparedness to die. But they also suggest that, in contrast to the Homeric model of the immortal, the life of the soul is not something which simply awaits at a later moment beyond life. The body need not preclude one from living psychically even now. Such psychic living has a double aspect. On the one hand, it comprises an ordering of the physical body so that it does not, as it were, gain the upper hand. If the body is ordered correctly, far from obfuscating the soul's understanding of the realities, it can in fact assist it. Such a condition, moreover, is not reserved for an obscure order of guardians, but is a hope which "exists for every man who thinks that his mind has been purified and made ready" (67c). Indeed, the dialogue itself testifies to the crucial component of physical mediation for the gradual attainment of the realities. Not only is the entire account of Socrates' own philosophical discourse itself embedded within a reported speech, thus stressing the crucial place for philosophy of mediation, language, discourse, and human friendship, but even within Socrates' own conversations, attention is drawn to various levels of physical and social mediation of philosophy. Philosophy is here no abstract exchange of static truths, but is incorporated into the narrative of inhabited social relations.

If to live psychically one must order the body so that it does not interfere with the soul's understanding of the realities, then the soul itself must be kept in order. For unless one "cares for the soul" now,[42] i.e., in one's life, in time, a terrible fate awaits it: "the soul takes with it to the other world nothing but its education and nurture."[43] Thus the orderly and wise soul is one that follows its guide and understands its circumstances,[44] and through the purificatory processes of *phronesis*, gathers itself from its dispersal throughout the body.[45]

The foregoing discussions[46] concerning the relation between the psychic and

41. *Phaedo*, 68d-69b.
42. *Phaedo*, 107c-d.
43. *Phaedo*, 107d.
44. *Phaedo*, 108a.
45. *Phaedo*, 67c. There are hints in the dialogue that a state of psuchical living has actually been attained. Phaedo mentions on several occasions to his interlocutor the strange emotions that overwhelm the gathered friends, whereby they felt neither pity nor pleasure, but instead an extreme or sublime synthesis of the two, as though the human passions are being repositioned in an entirely new order, e.g., *Phaedo*, 58e.
46. Nicole Loraux, "Therefore, Socrates is Immortal" and Eric Alliez and Michel Feher, "Reflections of a Soul," both in Michel Feher, ed., *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, Part Two (New York: Zone Books, 1989), pp. 12-45 and 46-85, respectively.

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the physical suggest that the soul is not in antithesis to life in the body. Indeed, Socrates states explicitly that, rather than seeking to circumvent embodied life in order to attain the realities all at once, i.e., by committing suicide, one must await the God-appointed time. Immortality of the soul, then, in its fullest realization — beyond the endless reincarnations — arrives only after one has inhabited the proper span of life according to the way of life lived by the philosopher. What this seems to suggest is an order of sacrifice whereby life *itself* — the living of one's life — *becomes* the sacrifice one offers, which one receives back non-identically as the soul's immortality, or its release from bondage. This is no longer an equivalent or all-for-all exchange; one cannot easily say that in Plato the living of one's life is wholly negative. To make such a connection between the philosophic life and sacrifice is not arbitrary, since there is much in the dialogue that recalls the protocols of ancient sacrifices — such as exhaustive instructions as to preparation, purification, times of day, temporal delay, and physical disposition and location. What Socrates is proposing, however, is a new order of non-bloody sacrifice which itself forms a critique of the model it displaces. This new order is perhaps obscurely inherited from Pythagoreanism, which tended also to advocate a non-bloody, non-civic sacrifice in that the ascent of smoke indicated not so much an exchange of what is sacrificed as an inhabited transfiguration of the self on the part of the officiant or philosopher. In this regard as well as others, one might say that Gill underestimates the extent to which Plato is critical of predialectical traditions of knowledge. Indeed, throughout the Platonic dialogues, Socrates seems to be insisting on a different kind of education, a different notion of justice and a new kind of city. Plato's suspension of these phenomena from the vision of the Good suggests that he is calling for different fundamental myths (p. 298).

Thus the Pythagorean and Platonic model articulated a new kind of sacrifice as transition, construed specifically as a kind of journey, in contrast to the earlier more economic model, where something is sacrificed to secure a specific gain. Now, if the philosophic life as such has become a new offering whose sacrificial element is not the rupture of a life, but its actual living, then it would seem that *Phaedo* narrates *two different sacrifices being brought together*. The first is the philosopher remaining in life (rather than committing suicide), which is a kind of loss or sacrifice in the sense that the philosopher remains during his life at a distance from the realities with which he longs for union. Nevertheless, if one is reconciled to this loss, one gains those realities all the more, or receives them back differently in the form of the soul's redeemed immortality or release from the burden of reincarnation. Meanwhile, one receives them as material participation.

One thus lives by combining a refusal of suicide with a philosophical preparedness to die, in such a way that it seems one has things as if one did not have them; the familiar becomes the unfamiliar, and everyday living becomes intensified as a ritual or sacrificial preparation. This correlates with the very nature of the soul which is at once other, a *daimon that* possesses one from without, and

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yet also something proximal, suffusing the whole body.[47]

The second sacrifice in *Phaedo* relates to the imminent sacrifice of Socrates himself, which is no longer the sacrificial postponement of death, but a readiness to give up his life prematurely. Socrates' execution, which ironically takes the form of suicide, for Socrates must administer the poison himself, is not intended as a sacrifice, but as a punishment by the city. Yet, it is understood by his followers as a sacrifice, but not in the old economy of a hero giving himself up for the city. Rather, Socrates is seen as dying on behalf of the vision of the Good, which he is not prepared to relinquish, or on behalf of the life he has refused to live as anything but a sacrifice-with-return. This refusal to relinquish his vision of the Good is precisely what prevents him from taking up his friends' offers to help him escape from his final execution. He is not prepared to run away, because this would be to circumvent the "proper time" when one must receive one's death from without — "until god sends some necessity, such as has now come upon me."[48] For even if the Athenians have misjudged Socrates and the laws are being misused, for him there is no human good outside the city, and its laws are still part of the divine order. So, by dying for the good under the laws of the city, he is dying to bring those two orders closer together. In a sense, he is dying for the city, but this is not the same city for which heroes sacrifice themselves. It is a psychic city not confined to mere walls and institutions, but a way of life that unites the physical and the metaphysical. Dying for such a city is a sacrifice with a transcendent return, because it yields immortality[49] and is disseminated as a model for others to emulate. And likewise, his death combines the two sacrifices, because the offering up of life to a premature and violent death Socrates himself did not instigate, consummates his refusal of a self-chosen suicide, a refusal that sacrificially postpones immortality.

The significant and surprising difference, then, from the Homeric sacrificial attainment of selfhood, is that, for Plato, the soul's immortality is not seen simply as negating embodied life. On the contrary, in several different ways the notion of immortality of the soul allows a certain positive return to the body, which permits its fullest possible realization as body. First of all, the practice of recollection permits

47. See Jean-Francois Mattéi, "The Theatre of Myth in Plato," in Charles L. Grisivold, ed., *Platonic Writings, Platonic Readings* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 66-83.

48. *Phaedo,* 116d-117a; see also *Crito* and *Apology*.

49. The numerous references in the *Phaedo* to life lived as a journey, a "second voyage" whose path one must follow (e.g. 107d; 115c), recalls the journey whose span of time is equal to the time of the "last philosophy," the time of the dialogue reported by Phaedo to Echecrates, which is one and the same with the ship's return from Delos. The latter was itself a journey, in honor of another journey: Theseus' return from Crete. Just as Theseus' voyage — his second voyage — marks a new sacrificial economy, for it marks the rupture of the brutal sacrificial economy of the Minotaur, so also Socrates relates to his companions a new argument for the soul's immortality that is now "proven" through a journey or way of life that one inhabits fully, does not seek to circumvent, and "follows as a journey withersoever it leads" (82d). See Jacob Klein, "Plato's *Phaedo*," in Robert B. Wlliamson and Elliott Zuckerman, eds., *Lectures and Essays* (Annapolis: St.John's College Press, 1985), pp. 375-393.

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one to live in the body *without fear*.[50] Under this regime alone, the body becomes something one can unambiguously enjoy without a ceaseless defensiveness. Secondly, the death of Socrates constitutes a kind of practical proof of immortality that leaves a legacy of Socratic doctrine in material time down the ages. Thirdly, because the soul participates more intensely in the Forms than does the body, the qualities in the body that are renounced are themselves regained at a higher level. In fact, this is so much the case that, in Socrates' second speech in the *Phaedrus*, he describes the lover and beloved as obtaining a future amorous intersubjectivity, which is presented as eschatological.[51] Fourthly, during this life, the contemplation of the Forms and the concomitant gathering of the soul to itself require an engagement with the body, not its eschewal. It is only through "the use of the senses" that one will have regained the knowledge that was "previously possessed."[52] It is only by focusing on material things that one is reminded of the Forms. The example that Socrates offers in the *Phaedo* for recollection, of a lyre reminding a lover of the image of his beloved, shows that a material thing will only cause one to recollect the forms if one also loves the material thing because of its association with one's beloved.[53] Furthermore, since the Form can never be recovered in time in its original purity, the only way in which one can love the Form is by loving its material traces, even though one must not stand still in that love, but rise to the higher love of which it reminds one. Plato even says in the *Phaedo* that recollection is caused "by unlike things" as well as like things, just as the lyre is unlike the beloved, although the image or picture would be like him. Thus the imaginative power of association linked with *eros* is needed to achieve recollection. The original is only recovered as it is manifest in new and strange ways, in differences, in time, as well as in likenesses. The Forms are constantly manifested in ways that cannot be anticipated, as an analogical pattern of non-identical repetition. This pattern may belong to the realm of the Forms themselves, but this pattern can never be known, because the forms are not *a priori* givens, but transcendent mysteries, which only time and the body may gradually disclose. It is not even clear that Plato always thinks of the soul as nearer to the Forms than the body, for the *Phaedo* concludes with the myth of a higher realm within the cosmos itself, a higher material sphere that is almost like a sphere of purified — one is tempted to say "resurrected" — bodies.[54]

Plato's doctrine of a non-material soul is, first, not dualistic in a Cartesian manner and, secondly, in a strange way actually enhances the material realm. Exactly where Gill stands on these ontological issues is not clear, yet his continued

50. John Milbank, "Sacred Triads: Augustine and the Indo-European Soul," in *Modern Theology*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (1997), pp. 451-474.

51. This may not exactly amount to a fully realized community, nor are these "light and winged" lovers definitively embodied. *Phaedrus*, 256b; see Jean-Louis Chretien, *L'Inoubliable et L'Inespéré* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1991), p. 29.

52. *Phaedo*, 75d-e.

53. *Phaedo*, 73d; 76a.

54. *Phaedo*, 109b.

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invocation of Daniel Dennett subscribes to a "functionalism" that is clearly materialist. Dennett's materialism, however, results in an opposite paradox to that of Platonism: it leads to an abstraction and rarefaction of matter in a fashion that is, still, thoroughly Cartesian. The first problem with Dennett's model concerns his metaphor of the computer to explain human consciousness. This fully mechanistic model treats the brain's workings as belonging to *res extensa*. If this is the case, what then is the status of Dennett's own gaze? Before he has finally made up his mind as to whether the brain is akin to the machine, he must assume that one can carry out an objective inquiry and presumably make judgments, which is to presuppose the existence of a transcendental subjectivity prior to all judgments as to the brain's nature as a machine.[55] A related problem concerns Dennett's thesis that the mind's operations can be predicted in the manner of a computer program.[56] Whatever his claims, this thesis cannot attain to the status of a *metaphysical* thesis, i.e., one that applies to all human beings *qua* human, because to be sustainable, one would have to prove that the experimenter's behavior in carrying out the experiment was also fully predictable. For this to be negotiated, there would have to be a meta-experimenter, and then a meta-meta-experimenter, and to infinity, so that at any given point there is always a *de facto* experimenter, but not a *de jure* experimenter of whom one can be sure the thesis of predictability applies.

One might add that Dennett's anti-Cartesian machine metaphor assumes too narrow a reading of Descartes. For the latter, the mind is akin to a "virtual machine,"[57] for it proceeds by intuitions of given data and deductions governed by mechanistic *regulae*. Moreover, Dennett's comparison of certain aspects of the brain's functions with computer software suggests a materialism predicated on ideality,[58] for the model of software reduces the mind's components to "virtually distinct parts," whose material actuality is perforce preceded by a fully rationalized organization. Such a model is indebted to a dualism of mind over body. But it also assumes that human thought arises only in the terms of indicative information, ignoring other modes of perception, such as desire and hope. Furthermore, Dennett's claim that such a model of consciousness is unlike that of the Cartesian "theater" does not fully account for the fact that such an information-based structure is itself a theatrical one, for it involves an entirely mimetic display of the world.[59] Indeed, computers are even built in the manner of miniature stage-sets. Finally, it does not take account of recent research into the workings of the brain, which has found that when one has a new thought, it is not that a given faculty within the brain is activated, but that the thinking of a thought itself causes a change within that faculty, in an unpredictable manner. If the above is at all correct, it follows that as soon

55. Daniel C. Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (London: Penguin, 1991); see also his *Brainstorms: Philosophical Essays on Mind and Psychology* (London: Penguin, 1997).
56. Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, *op. cit.*, p. 190.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 209
58. *Ibid.*, p. 210.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 17ff.

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as one tries to overcome a dualism of mind and body by recourse to a functionalist or materialist argument, discounting the possibility of a spiritual (or psuchical) dimension, then one can only construe the mind as not-mind, and the body as not-body. This means reducing the mind to an abstract logical sequence in combination with blind will, and the body to efficient causality in combination with blind force, so that they become one and the same. But to do this is, after all, to occlude the full and mysterious density of the corporeal, with all its ineluctable qualities.

In *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*, Ralph Cudworth in 1678 wrote: "Wherefore, were there no other substance in the world besides this magnitude or extension, there could be no motion or action at all in it; no life, cogitation, consciousness; no intellection, appetite or volition (which things do yet make up the greatest part of the universe), but all would be a dead heap or lump; nor could any one substance penetrate another, and co-exist in the same place with it. From whence it follows of necessity, that besides this outside bulky extension, and tumorous magnitude, there must be another kind of entity, whose essential attribute or character is life, self-activity, or cogitation."[60] Cudworth argues that if the physical universe is only Cartesian extension, then it is impossible to account for its activity, even of a mechanical kind. There must also be force, life, which is somehow "self-activating," and the most acute instance of this phenomenon is mind. The experience of mind suggests that power and architectonic organization belong together: hence Cudworth suggests that diffused throughout the cosmos is a psychic "plastic principle" that gives matter its full reality — its articulations, energies, passions and other capacities (in animals also emotions, in humans also conscious reasonings).[61] Thus, against Hobbes, who denied the psychic, and in qualification of Descartes, who drained matter of in-dwelling psychic influence, Cudworth re-invoked Platonic participation of the material in the psychic which alone sustains its full materiality. Now, as in the 17th century, the problem with any mere materialism or functionalism is that it always reduces matter and leaves it as less than it intuitively appears to be. Materialism's only causal resort is to refer what arrives to the general norms of what has already been. By doing this, it essentializes the new thing, and sets up a metaphysical dualism between this true essence and its illusory, epiphenomenal appearance of novelty. Whereas, as for Plato in the *Phaedo*, and as Cudworth reaffirmed, echoing that text, the only way to account for a newly-arrived phenomenon without denying the reality of its appearance by reducing it to what has gone before, is to assign it to the workings of creative mind and to the continued manifestation of an inexhaustible transcendent perfection.

Catherine Pickstock

60. Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe Wherein All the Reason and Philosophy of Atheism is Confuted, and its Impossibility Demonstrated*, tr. by John Harrison (Cheapside: Thomas Tegg, 1845), Volume III, p. 394.

61. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 222-284.

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*Nazism And Communism: Evil Twins?**

Stéphane Courtois, ed., *Le Livre Noir du Communisme* (Paris: Laffont, 1997).

The publication of this *Black Book* by a group of historians to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the October Revolution has opened a heated debate, first in France and then abroad. Edited by Stéphane Courtois, who also wrote the preface (instead of François Furet, who died a few months before its publication), this work attempts to provide an accurate account of the human cost of communism in view of the documentary evidence available today. The estimate is around 100 million dead — four times the body-count of Nazism. These figures are not really a revelation. From Boris Souvarine to Robert Conquest and Aleksander Solzhenitsyn, many authors have dealt with matters such as the Gulag; the famines deliberately provoked by the Kremlin (which in 1921-22 and 1932-33 killed in the Ukraine five and six million people respectively); the forced deportations, between 1930 and 1953, of seven million people within the Soviet Union (kulaks, Volga Germans, Chechens, Tatars and others from Caucasus); the millions killed during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, etc. By comparison, the *Black Book*'s figures are rather conservative.[1]

The intense interest in the *Black Book* is due to the fact that it is based on accurate documentation from the Moscow archives, now open to researchers. This is why the figures have not been questioned. Based on this documentation, some reviewers conclude that "the balance sheet of communism constitutes the worst case of political carnage in history,"[2] or "the greatest, the bloodiest criminal system in history."[3] Thus, the debate has not been about the facts themselves, but their interpretation. According to Courtois, communist regimes everywhere have "raised mass criminality to the level of a veritable system of government." From this, one can infer communism did not contradict its principles when it killed people, but followed them — in other words, that communism was not just

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* Originally published in *Eléments*, No. 92 (July 1998), pp. 15-24. Translated by Francesca Ficai.

1. While Stéphane Courtois estimates at 20 million the number of victims in the USSR alone, Rudolf Rummel came up with a figure of 62 million. Jacques Rossi, *Le Manuel du Goulag* (Paris: Cherche-Midi, 1997) talks about 17 to 20 million prisoners in the Gulag between 1940 and 1950.

2. Martin Malia, "The Lesser Evil?" in *Times Literary Supplement* (March 27, 1998), p. 3.

3. Pierre Chaunu, "Les Jumeaux Malins du Deuxième Millénaire," in *Commentaire* (Spring 1998), p. 219.

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a system which committed crimes, but one whose very essence was criminal. As Tony Judt put it,[4] today no one can dispute the criminal nature of communism. It should be added, that communism killed many more people than Nazism, it killed over a longer period of time than Nazism, and it began doing so before Nazism. "The methods used by Lenin and systematized by Stalin and those who emulated them," writes Courtois, "are not only reminiscent of Nazi methods, but preceeded them." This alone calls for "a comparative analysis concerning similarity between a regime which, since 1945, has been regarded as the most criminal of the century, and the communist system, which up to 1991 retained its international legitimacy, is still in power in some countries, and has supporters throughout the world."

The debate concerns these two questions. The notion that communism can be regarded as inherently criminal and virtually exterminationist continues to generate intense opposition, but no less so than the notion of the comparability of communism and Nazism. Courtois has been attacked for even broaching these two subjects. The attacks have been so violent that some authors have not hesitated to speak of the *Black Book* as an "intellectual deception" and "propaganda" (Gilles Perrault), a "mess" (Jean-Marie Colombani), "a gift to the National Front at the time of the Papon trial" (Lilly Marcou), "the gruesome accounting of wholesalers" (Daniel Bensaid), "an ideological tract" (Jean-Jacques Marie), "a fraud" (Maurice Nadeau), "the denial of history" (Alain Blum) and even "negationism" (Adam Rayski). Revealing in this regard is that Courtois has been reproached for having written that: "the death by starvation of an Ukrainian kulak child as a result of the deliberate famine orchestrated by the Stalinist regime rates the same as the death by starvation of a Jewish child in the Warsaw ghetto during the famine brought about by the Nazi regime." What is scandalous, however, is not this sentence, but the fact that it was even questioned. Philippe Petit went as far as to write that "all deaths do not have the same value."[5] Unfortunately, he did not provide any criteria to distinguish between victims of the first rank and those of the second. The fact that today it is still unclear whether a crime is a crime or whether all the victims have the same value says much about the spirit of the times.

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Communists have always rejected indignantly the very idea of comparing communism and Nazism. This is not surprising: the comparison would have been rejected with the same indignation by the Nazis. Yet, the comparison has been made many times over the years by authors such as Waldemar Gurian, Elie Halévy, George Orwell, Victor Serge, André Gide, Simone Weil, Marcel Mauss, and Bernard Shaw. Those who had the sad privilege of being imprisoned both in the Soviet and in the Nazi camps had the opportunity to compare them

4. In *International Herald Tribune* (December 23, 1997).
5. In *Marianne* (November 10, 1997).

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concretely. One of these was Margarete Buber-Neumann. Part of a group of German communists who had fallen in disfavor with Stalin, she was imprisoned in the Karaganda camp in Siberia in 1937, then handed over by the Soviet secret police (then called NKVD) to the Gestapo at the time of the Nazi-Soviet pact in 1939. Set free from the Ravensbruck camp in 1945, she had this to say: "I do not think a difference of degree ever existed or exists today in favor of the Soviet camps." Her voice was immediately suppressed.

The same comparison was the basis of Hannah Arendt's famous study of totalitarianism. Allan Bullock wrote parallel biographies of Stalin and Hitler. More recently, Furet, who has long wondered about the real reasons for the refusal to compare the two systems, has written: "This prohibition, internalized by the disconsolate as an almost religious truth, prevents thinking of communism in terms of its deepest reality — that it is totalitarian."[6] Nazism and communism have been described by Pierre Chaunu as "heterozygous twins."[7] In a speech at the annual meeting of the French Institute, Alain Besançon, characterized these systems as "equally criminal."[8] The comparison between communism and Nazism is in fact not only legitimate, but indispensable because, without it, these two phenomena become unintelligible. The only way to understand them — and to understand the history of the first part of this century — is to "take them together" (Furet), to study them "in their own time" (Ernst Nolte), i.e., in their common historical context.

One of the reasons for this is what Nolte has called a "causal nexus" between communism and Nazism. In some respects, Nazism appears as a *symmetrical* reaction to communism. In 1922, at the time of the march on Rome, Mussolini sought to confront the "red threat." The following year, at the time of the march to the Feldherrnhalle, Nazism was born in the wake of the Bavarian Commune and the Spartacist insurrections. Given the weakness and ineptness of parliamentary regimes, the "national" revolutionary *coup d'état* seemed to be a logical answer to the Bolshevik *coup d'état*, and, at the same time, introduced into civil life some of methods learned in the trenches. Thus, Nazism could be defined as an anti-communist movement that borrowed from its adversary its forms and methods — beginning with terror itself. This thesis, originally put forth in 1942 by Sigmund Neumann,[9] has been systematized by Nolte in his "historical and genetic" interpretation of the totalitarian phenomenon. It calls for an analysis of the common origins and interdependence between the two systems. Of course, pushed too far, it can lead to neglecting the ideological roots of both, which predate the Great

6. Letter to Jean Daniel, in *Commentaire* (Spring 1998), p. 246. Cf. also François Furet, "Nazisme et communisme: la comparaison interdite," in *L'Histoire* (March 1995), pp. 18-20.

7. *Op. cit.*

8. Now in *Commentaire* (Winter 1997-98), p.790. Some passages had already been published in *Le Monde* (October 22, 1997), p. 17.

9. *Permanent Revolution. Totalitarianism in the Age of International Civil War* (London, 1942).

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War (1914-18). Yet, there is no doubt that it contains at least an element of truth. To put it another way, one can wonder whether Nazism would have been the same if there had been no Soviet communism. The answer is probably: no.

Another reason that justifies the comparison is the overlapping of their histories. Just as the Soviet system had mobilized under the banner of "anti-fascism," so the Nazi system mobilized under the banner of "anti-communism." The latter saw liberal democracies as weak and vulnerable to the threat of communism, while simultaneously the former denounced them as susceptible to "fascism." Being anti-Nazi, communism tried to demonstrate that all rational anti-fascism led to communism. Being anti-communist, Nazism sought to instrumentalize anti-communism in a similar way — by reference to a common enemy. This tactic was not inconsequential. As George Orwell pointed out in the 1930s, many people became Nazis out of fear of communism, while many became communists in order to fight Nazism. Fear of communism led many to support Hitler in his "Crusade against Bolshevism." Fear of Nazism led many to see the Soviet Union as humanity's last hope.

To compare regimes is not to assimilate them: comparable regimes are not necessarily the same. To compare means to consider two distinct individual phenomena within the same category. It is neither to trivialize nor to relativize. The victims of communism do not cancel out the victims of Nazism any more than the victims of Nazism cancel out the victims of communism. Thus, the crimes of one regime cannot be used to justify or diminish the importance of the crimes perpetrated by the other: deaths do not cancel out: they add up. The fact that communism destroyed even more people than Nazism does not mean that the latter is "preferable" to the former, because it was never a matter of choosing between the two.

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Communism destroyed more people than Nazism. Yet, the prevailing opinion is still that Nazism was worse than communism. How is this possible? Confronted with equally destructive systems, how can the more destructive one be the less horrible? How can one continue to reject the idea that they can be compared? The only way to do so is to refrain from drawing any balance sheet of the two systems to avoid confronting the results of the comparison. The argument most often advanced for this has to do with the difference between the initial inspirations of the two systems: Nazism was a doctrine of hate; communism, a doctrine of liberation. Communism was fostered by love of humanity, which Robert Hue calls "communion"; Nazism, by the rejection of the idea of humanity. Jean-Jacques Becker claims that "humanism is at the root of communism, while the opposite is the case with Nazism."[10] Roger Martelli

10. "Les Fièvres Anticommunistes," in *L'Histoire* (November, 1997), p. 22.

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adds: "Communism represents an idea of humanity based on reason and human equality."[11] Roland Leroy writes: "At the roots of Nazism there is hatred of mankind. At the roots of communism, there is love of mankind." According to Guy Konopnicki: "People became Nazi because of hatred of humanity. People became communist strictly for the opposite reason."[12]

The conclusion is that Nazi crimes were foreseeable; communist crimes were not. Stalin's crimes were the result of a perversion of communism, which was "an ideal of human liberation,"[13] while Hitler's crimes followed directly from his ideology. Nazism could be compared to a serial killer, while communism to the unfortunate good Samaritan who kills those he wants to save. Criminal by vocation, by exterminating people Nazism kept its promises and carried out its program. Criminal by mistake, communism betrayed its promises. Nazi practices followed directly from its doctrine, while the practices of Soviet communism "constituted, so to say, a misguided application of a sound ideology."[14] Communism was destructive only by accident, inadvertence, or awkwardness. Its crimes resulted from a faulty interpretation or from misdirection. Communist terror might be compared to an unlucky avatar, to "a kind of meteorological accident" (Besançon). In short, despite 100 million dead, communism could be defined as an idea of brotherly love that fell into hate unwillingly — a respectable project gone bad.

Thus, the human cost of communism should be regarded as the result of a "deviation." Soviet terror, Jean-Jacques Becker explains, resulted above all from "the inability of its leaders to achieve by other means" an ideal "based on social justice and love of life."[15] Communist militants, Gilles Perrault adds, "joined a project that sought to be universal and emancipatory. The fact that this ideal was corrupted does not detract from their motivations." According to Madeleine Rebérioux, honorary president of the League of Human Rights: "To say that communism is equivalent to Nazism is to forget . . . that the USSR never organized the exclusion of any human group from the common law"![16] In short: communist crimes were progressive. This argument calls for closer scrutiny.

11. "Une Différence de Nature," in *Avant-garde* (December 1997), p. 28.
12. "Un Naufrage dans l'Archipel du Goulag," in *L'Evénement du Jeudi* (November 6, 1997), p. 22.
13. Robert Hue, "Nazisme, Communisme: La Comparison est Odieuse et Inacceptable," in *L'Evénement du Jeudi* (November 13, 1997), p. 59. Simone Korff Sausse has rightly remarked that Robert Hue denounces the Gulag as a "monstrosity" in order to present Stalinism as a pathological excrescence without any relation with "real" communism. The "monster" (the Gulag) is what differs in nature from normality (communism). "Here is a good example," she writes, "of a stalinist maneuver pretending to be a critique of Stalinism. The notion of the monster seeks to rule out debate." See "Monstruosité et Manoeuvre Stalinienne," in *Libération* (December 9, 1997), p. 5.
14. In *L'Histoire* (January 1998), p. 3.
15. Interview in *La Vie* (November 27, 1997), p. 11.
16. In *Le Journal du Dimanche* (November 2, 1997).

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"One has the right to wonder," writes Courtois," why killing in the hope of 'a better life thereafter' is more excusable than slaughter linked to a racist doctrine, and why does the illusion (or the hypocrisy) constitute attenuating circumstances to mass murder."[17] It is unclear why it is less important or less condamnable to kill those who have been promised happiness instead of killing those who have been promised nothing. To commit evil in the name of good is no better than to commit evil in the name of evil. To destroy freedom in the name of freedom is no better than to destroy it in the name of the need to suppress it. The first may be even worse. A vice is less excusable when practiced by those who profess virtue, because they are supposed to abide by their principles. Thus, there is a kind of logic in judging more severely a system with good intentions, but which, "in reality, has been imposed everywhere with violence and has destroyed a huge number of victims, than one where the perpetrators' intentions were bad from the very beginning."[18] In other words, mitigating circumstances are not on the side one may expect at first sight.

Here the question arises whether one should judge political regimes on the basis of their intentions or their acttions. Marx, it should be recalled, was the first to challenge the morality of intentions: according to him, history comes first of all with *praxis*. As Chantal Delsol put it: "When an idealist has committed crimes for 80 years and refuses to be called a criminal, because of his original intention, one can only conclude that intention is to blame."[19] "To see the last Marxists in this country take refuge in a morality of intentions," writes Jacques Julliard, "will remain, for those who like to laugh, one of the century's best jokes."[20]

To claim that an ideal stands or falls with its intentions is to confuse truth with sincerity.[21] Today, this is not unusual. It goes along with an approach to the history of ideas that is at once subjective and moral. Instead of distinguishing right from wrong ideas, one prefers to distinguish between "good" and "bad" ideas, without specifying how to determine which is which. (This is one of the reasons why it is not worth the effort to refute wrong ideas). In reality, however, to qualify the communist ideal as "generous," means nothing. Two questions arise immediately. The first: "generous" according to which criteria? The second: is a "generous" idea necessarily right? Communism and Nazism are two political systems based on false ideas. In this respect, their real or supposed "generosity" is unimportant. If one can massacre four times more people in the

17. In *Le Monde* (December 20, 1997).

18. Ernst Nolte, correspondence with François Furet, in *Commentaire* (Winter 1997-98), p. 806.

19. "Criminels par Erreur," in *Valeurs Actuelles* (November 22, 1997), p. 31,

20. "Ne Dites pas 'Jamais'," in *Le Nouvel Observateur* (November 20, 1997), p. 49.

21. "What is important is not whether my accounts are true, but whether they are sincere," writes Albert Jacquard in his *Petite Philosophie à l'Usage des Non-philosophes* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1997), p. 205.

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name of a "generous" idea than in the name of a doctrine of hate, then it may be time to mistrust generosity. Finally, the sophistry of human unhappiness is on the side of the hangman, not of the victims. To be the victim of a beautiful idea, even if corrupted, does not make one less of a victim: for the one being hung, what is the difference? When the Inquisition burned people for their own good, they were not thereby consoled. When the means are the same, the ends are blurred.

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It is not enough to say that communism is a wonderful idea gone bad. It must be explained how it could go bad, i.e., how a wonderful idea, far from protecting against horror, did not prevent it any more than a bad idea. How was it possible to persecute people in the name of the good, to create camps to free people, and to establish terror in the name of progress? How could hope become a nightmare? This is the real philosophical question. Unfortunately, there is nothing philosophical about the proposed answer. It is limited to circumstances. Allegedly, Leninist violence would then be the heir of Tsarist violence. It would have been fed by the violence of the 1914-18 war, and indeed by the capitalists' reaction, then in full swing in Russia. It could have resulted from the Bolsheviks having to fight the white army during the civil war. Since they came to power in a country lacking any democratic traditions, the Bolsheviks might have been "carried away reluctantly in a cycle of violence they could not stop" (Michel Dreyfus). In that case, however, this violence would have been contained. On the contrary, Stalinist terror was a deviation or a corruption of Russian communism: the violence would have changed in nature, not only in degree.

But it is precisely this explanation that the publication of the *Black Book* rules out. Rejecting the fable of the "good Lenin" and the "bad Stalin," it shows that the system of terror was established as soon as Lenin took power. Since 1914, he had said: "the essence of our work . . . is to transform the war into a civil war," which is only "the natural continuation, the development and the intensification of the class struggle." The Cheka was established on December 1917. At that time, Trotsky stated: "In less than a month, terror will take some very violent forms, like what happened during the French Revolution." While, between 1825 and 1917, the Tsarist regime sentenced 6,321 to death, most convictions being commuted to hard labor, by March 1918, the Leninist regime, in power for only five months, had already killed 18,000 people. On August 31, 1918, the head of the Cheka ordered "every person who dared to publish the slightest propaganda against the Soviet regime" sent to concentration camps. More precisely, Trotsky pointed out that: "the question of knowing to whom power belongs . . . would be resolved not by references to constitutional articles but, rather, by recourse to every kind of violence." In 1921, there were already seven concentration camps, filled mostly with women and old people. Thus, communist terror cannot be interpreted as simply a continuation of the pre-revolutionary political culture; and even

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less as a reflection of "violence coming from the people" or of a "Russian servile tradition." Finally, it cannot be explained as a simple response to "white terror." On the contrary, repression developed full blast only after the civil war ended.

The argument concerning mitigating "circumstances" calls for a contextualization of communist crimes, and for taking into account the historical series of causes and effects, e.g., the need to defend against the enemy. This procedure is rarely adopted *vis-à-vis* Nazi crimes. But if there is nothing specifically communist about communist terror, then there is nothing specifically Nazi about Nazi terror. Presumably, despite its pretensions to universality, communism somehow can be explained geographically. But the fact that it has been destructive everywhere it came to power makes one skeptical about the decisive influence of the context. If it was a matter of circumstances, why were these circumstances reproduced everywhere? Moreover, it is difficult to see terror as the result of a "deviation," since it was there from the very beginning. If Stalin only systematized the system of terror founded by Lenin, it is then equally difficult to contrapose the communist ideal to its concrete applications. Of course, one can argue that the Soviet system has never had anything to do with communism. But if Lenin was not a communist, who was ever one?

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Julliard wonders: "In what sense are criminals appealing to 'good' less condemnable than criminals appealing to 'evil'?"[22] The question is pertinent, but poorly formulated. Nazism never "appealed to evil" any more than communism did. It made use of ideas that one can deservedly find false, and therefore evil, which is completely different. But it is not as if the evaluation one has of oneself corresponded to that of other. Otherwise, one could claim that communism also appealed not to the good, but to evil, in proportion to the horror these ideas can suggest. The rationale of opposing the Nazi "doctrine of hate" to the communist "ideal of human emancipation" is thus debatable. It would amount to contraposing a definition of communism by its supporters to a definition of Nazism by its opponents. Under these conditions, it is not difficult to make the first appear as good as the latter evil. From an artificial asymmetry, one draws a conclusion no less artificial. This is a *non sequitur*.

Nazism did not pretend to promise people any less "happiness" than communism. It did not promise any less a "radiant" outlook to its supporters. To say the opposite, as David Lindenberg does, when he writes that the Nazis "gained many supporters because of its penchant for murder,"[23] makes its appeal to the masses inexplicable. To say that a political system could generate enthusiasm by presenting itself openly as advocating a "doctrine of hate" is tantamount to saying that its supporters were sick, mad, criminals, or perverts. Then one would have to explain

22. In *L'Année des Fantômes* (Paris: Grasset, 1998), p. 342.
23. "Remous autour du *Livre Noir du Communisme*," in *Esprit* (January 1998), p. 192.

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how an entire population could go crazy. If it is by nature, what does this say about human nature? If it is by accident, how does it come about — and how can it end?

Nazism and communism seduced the masses with different ideals, both of which can appear equally attractive. The whole problem comes from what the realization of these ideals implied in both cases: the eradication of part of humanity. From this viewpoint, the distinction between extermination as a means to realize a political objective and extermination as an end in itself is doubtful: no regime has ever seen the massacres it engaged in as an "end in itself." Courtois characterizes "racial genocide" and "class genocide" as two sub-categories of "crimes against humanity." In both cases, the end is the same. Both the utopia of a classless society and of a pure race required the elimination of those presumed to be obstacles to the realization of a "grandiose" project, impediments to the realization of a radically better society. In both cases, the ideology (racial or class struggle) led to a bad principle: the exclusion of whole categories ("inferior" races or "harmful" classes) composed of people whose only crime was to belong to one of these categories, i.e., to exist. Both systems designated an absolute enemy with whom it was impossible to compromise. In both cases, the result was planned terror. Class or racial hatred, social or racial prophylaxis, it is all the same.

Here "class" is not a more flexible or less indelible category than "race." Both were equally essentialized. On November 1, 1918, one of the first leaders of the Cheka, Martyn Latsis, declared: "We do not make war against people in particular. We exterminate the 'bourgeoisie' as a class." On January 24, 1919, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union ordered that cossacks had to be "exterminated and physically liquidated to the last one." Later, Stalin would say that the "Kulaks are not human being." In 1932, Maxime Gorki added: "Class hatred must be cultivated by organic repulsion of the enemy as an inferior being: a physical but also a moral degenerate." From the viewpoint of a Lysenko, maintaining the inheritance of acquired characteristics, social defects could well be considered genetically transmissible.

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Furet wrote that Nazism and communism are as "opposed as the particular to the universal." Others gave communism credit, because at least it had been moved by universalist considerations. This reasoning is also biased. The fact that Nazism pretended to make happy only part of humanity — the German people — while communism pretended to extend this happiness to all of humanity does not tip the belance in favor of the second. When one fights in the name of a nation, one can exclude from this nation. "To purify the race" at least limits havoc to the race. But to purify humanity? On the basis of its presuppositions, Nazism described some of its adversaries as "sub-humans." On the same basis, communism could only exclude from humanity. Efforts to regenerate all of humanity inevitably lead to excluding from humanity those who supposedly prevent this

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regeneration. Precisely because, from the very beginning, communism wanted to fight in the name of all of humanity, its destructive character spread to all of humanity. Far from providing attenuating circumstances, its universalist pretenses explain its universally murderous character.

Thus, efforts to emancipate the whole earth do not prevent terror but, on the contrary, confer to these efforts a higher legitimation. To defend an absolute ideal justifies recourse to absolute means. On August 1919, one could read the following in *Krasnii Metch* (*The Red Sword* — an organ of the Cheka of Kiev): "Our morality is unprecedented, our humanity is absolute, because it is based on a new ideal: to destroy all forms of oppression and violence. For us, everything is allowed, because we are the first in the world to raise the sword, not to oppress, or to drive into slavery, but to free humanity from its chains. . . . Blood? Let it flow!"

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Hostile to any comparison between Nazism and communism, some authors have sought to find differences in motivation or behavior, beyond the supposed differences in inspiration. "A young man moving in the direction of communism," writes Jean Daniel, "is at least living with a desire for communion. A young fascist is only fascinated by domination. That is the essential difference."[24] As Jean-Marie Colombani put it: "There will always be a difference between those who devote themselves to ideals linked to democratic [*sic*] hope, and those attracted by a system based on exclusion, triggering the individuals' most dangerous instincts."[25] These are completely subjective evaluations. As Besançon has noted, in reality both Nazism and communism proposed some "higher ideal" able to "generate enthusiastic devotion and heroic acts." Both seduced famous individuals and leading intellectuals. Both inspired rare self-sacrifices. The Germans supported their Führer to the end, despite destruction and death, while the collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in its becoming discredited among the Soviet population. But communism also has provided immense hope for millions of people. It inspired struggles that were often just and necessary. To claim, with Jean-Jacques Becker, that "Nazism or fascism never inspired the same fervor"[26] as communism, is to forget that 360.000 Waffen SS were foreign volunteers, while only 35,000 foreigners volunteered for the International Brigades.

If it is true that totalitarian systems organized their own mass mobilizations, it is no less true that totalitarianism also benefited, at least for a time, from a mass following and that often this support has translated into behavior worthy of admiration. Instead of denying or ignoring this, it would be better to ask, how were political systems which have turned out to be the most destructive in history able simultaneously to inspire so much devotion, heroism, sacrifice and selflessness.

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24. In *Le Nouvel Observateur* (October 30, 1997), p. 51.
25. "Le Communisme et Nous," in *Le Monde* (December 5, 1997).
26. "Les Fièvres Anticomunistes," in *L'Histoire* (November 1997), p. 6.

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A first approximation at an answer might be that, to the extent that one sees the absolute in these systems, they lead to absolute behaviors, in good as well as bad. That the same system can be simultaneously criminal and able to inspire admirable behaviors, will inevitably offend naive individuals or committed partisans, resulting (wrongly) in their conclusions that the system is not criminal or (equally wrong) that these behaviors are not worthy of admiration. That supporters of totalitarian regimes may behave heroically does not make the cause they defend any better and, conversely, the nature of this cause does not detract from individual heroism. The fact that individuals are virtuous does not automatically make the doctrines they espouse virtuous. Pascal is wrong in claiming that one can take seriously only those who are willing to die for their beliefs: the fact that they are willing to risk being killed testifies only to the strength of their convictions, not to their truth.

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In a birrarre way, Martelli relies on the fact that Stalin unleashed many purges within his own Party, when he writes: "There were some communists who were anti-Stalinists, but there were no anti-Hitler Nazi."[27] The argument is taken from Nicholas Werth, who claims that there have never been any Nazis critical of Hitlerism, or who "sought to reform the system from within." The existence of communists, who became victims under Stalin, or revolted against the "disfiguration" of their ideas by the Soviet regime, is supposed to testify to the betrayal of communist ideals by "official" communism. This is a weak argument. Robespierre was a victim of the Terror, but that does not exonerate him of his responsibilities within the establishment of this terror. It is typical of all political systems to breed dissidents of every kind. It does not follow that these dissidents are automatically right in their opposition to their former comrades. As for the idea that there were no anti-Hitler Nazis, it is simply false. Besides those who, in 1933 aspired to a "national revolution" in Germany and were not only disappointed, but frequently persecuted by the Third Reich (such as the brothers Otto and Gregor Strasser, as well as victims of the January 1934 purge), here one could cite Hermann Rauschning's *Revolution of Nihilism*, published on the eve of the war, which is comparable to Boris Souvarine's *Stalin*. Finally, there are well-known opposition groups, which developed during the war within the SS and the SD. If the Third Reich had lasted longer than a dozen years, the number of dissidents is likely to have grown.

On the other hand, one can say that Nazism killed less Nazis than communism killed communists. Is this to the communists credit? One of the particularities of the Soviet, as opposed to the Nazi system, is that the regime's supporters were viewed with equal suspicion as those who remained its adversaries. In the

27. *Op. cit.*, p. 28

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Soviet system, the imaginary of the conspiracy was internalized to the point where supporters were seen as so many traitors in power. That is why survailance of the population was so intense and incentives to inform even more systematic: in 1939, the Gestapo employed 6,900 people; the NKVD, 350,000. Another characteristic typical of communist terror, exposed at the Moscow trials, was the insistence to make dissidents "confess" to crimes they had not commited; in other words, they were forced to negate their own existence. Classical tyrannies limited themselves merely to silencing the opposition. In addition, totalitarian regimes wanted to maintain loyalty and control not only of actions but also thoughts. Soviet communism wanted to control its population's mental reservations. Lenin and Stalin ordered the slaughter of many of their camrades (with the exception of the January 1934 purge, Hitler did not follow suit). Understandably, this shocked survivors. But it is bizarre to use these excesses of inhumanity to conclude that communism was more humane. Of course, Nazism generally treated Germans very differently than the population of other occupied countries, while Stalin did not discriminate. Only a small minority of the people in Nazi concentration camps were German, while 15 million Russians were sent to the Gulag between 1934 and 1947. Once again, the fact that Nazis attacked primarily foreign populations, while communist regimes massacred mostly their own people, is not an argument in favor of the communists. In penal law, to kill a member of one's own family is considered an especially serious crime.

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In claiming, in an editorial deemed important enough to appear in an anthology under the heading of "influential literature," that the *Black Book* risks "playing into the hands of the extreme Right," Jean-Marie Colombani deploys a strategic argument. Speaking of "ideological one-sidedness," "simplification," and "amalgam," he writes that the real danger is that it "serves as an alibi for those who wish to prove that one crime is worth another, thereby breaking down the last remaining barriers preventing the legitimation of the extreme Right."[28] Presumably, the only means to "delegitimate" the extreme Right is to maintain that all crimes are not equal, or, in other words, that some are less serious than others. But according to what criteria?

The argument that denouncing the crimes of communism plays into the hands of the extreme Right recycles Stalinist rhetoric used to mobilize against a third party, a common enemy. This rhetoric is based on a simple sylogism: since some "bad" anti-communists may make use of this kind of arguments, one should not give them any ammunition by criticizing communism. This is teleological utilitarianism: there are some undesirable truths, which are unprofitable, and necessary lies. The question here concerns the nature of truth: is truth what manifests itself

28. *Op. cit.*

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as true or what, under certain circumstances, can be anticipated to be profitable? If truth does not have intrinsic worth, but is only good to the extent that one can use it in the service of a cause or a determined belief, then there is no truth at all. Furthermore, if truth depends on the use one can make of it, then it is no longer possible to claim that one doctrine is more true than another. One can no longer make any claims about the true and the false, but only about "good" and "bad," with "good" being purely instrumental, without any relation to the true.

If one follows Jean-Marie Colombani's logic, all historical research that risks nourishing bad thoughts should be forbidden. Thus, one must follow the footsteps of Jean-Paul Sartre, who pretended that silence regarding the Soviet camps was necessary "not to lead Billancourt to dispair." "Those people," Courtois observes, "have never broken with the culture of the political commissar, which poisons the publishing environment."[29]

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From the very beginning, the idea of any comparison between the communist and Nazi regimes was also questioned, because of the horrible organized persecution of Jews during the Third Reich. Deemed "unique," this persecution is by nature incommensurable and even "indescribable." It allegedly constitutes an unparalleled event — in the past, in the present and even in the future. The word "genocide" does not have a plural, and Nazism is the black star whose dismal light pales all others. Challenging this "uniqueness" (*Einzigartigkeit*) would lead to the trivialization of Nazism. Recognition of this "uniqueness" compels one to see it as an absolute evil, i.e., an evil incomparable to any other. However, from a historian's standpoint, it is clear that to regard the phenomenon of Nazism as "unique" does not permit its understanding, hinders any analysis, which is automatically seen as a "trivialization." An event unrelated to any other becomes incomprehensible. It ceases to be a necessarily contextualized historical event, in order to become a pure idea. Moreover, to declare it "unique" is to take a contradictory path, because to refuse to admit that there is anything comparable about the two systems and to posit their differences as "absolute" leaves one unable to find precisely what makes them unique. Tzvetan Todorov justifiably asks: "How does one decide that something is different from everything else, if one has never compared them?"[30]

The idea that one "trivializes" Nazi crimes by refusing to admit their "uniqueness" is equally untenable. It presupposes that crimes cancel each other out or that, contextualized, murders become less murderous. This idea conceals another, actually a perverse one, which paves the way for its own reversal: to

29. "Le Communisme Réel a Produit un Cauchemar," in *La Une* (January 1998), p. 18.

30. "Je conspire, Hannah Arendt conspirait, Raymond Aron aussi . . ." in *Le Monde* (January 31, 1998).

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make a system and it alone "absolute evil" relativizes the deeds of all others. If to recall communist crimes amounts to trivializing those of Nazism, then to recall Nazi crimes necessarily trivializes all other crimes. In order not to trivialize a single case, one ends up with a general trivialization. Here one can ask whether "to trivialize" is the right word. There is certainly a "banality of evil" (Hannah Arendt), because evil, along with the good, is part of human nature.

To dogmatically claim absolute particularity for any phenomenon amounts to removing its potential exemplary character. To draw the lesson from the past implies, by definition, that this past is at least partly reproducible, or it would be useless to pretend to draw any lessons from it. Once again, as Todorov writes: "what is particular cannot teach us anything at all for the future."[31] The same people who become indignant about comparing communism to Nazism, at the same time attribute to Nazism all sorts of ideas they dislike. This is inconsistent. The same people who insist that Nazism is a "unique" phenomenon also claim that they see it being reborn every day. One cannot have it both ways. Nazism cannot be "unique" and at the same time potentially present everywhere. By definition, a "unique" event cannot be repeated. If it can be repeated, then it is not "unique."

The thesis concerning "uniqueness" is actually a metaphysical argument. When the executioners cannot be compared to any other, the same goes for the victims. The absolute particularity of the one implies the absolute particularity of the other — absolute evil implies absolute good. Then, persecution is explained by the election. Thus, Jewish suffering is part "not of history, but, on the contrary, of a grace whereby the Jews would be the Christ-people."[32] Jean Daniel, Edgar Morin and Henry Rousso talk about "Judeo-centrism" to characterize this view.[33] But it does not make any more sense to present an executioner as representing absolute evil than it does to present a victim as representing absolute good. This would mean that there are some lives more unpardonable to suppress than others. This idea is precisely the one held by the Nazis, when they talked about "lives without the value of life." It is unacceptable. No people or human category has by nature a superior existential or moral status. None can infer from their beliefs, their origin, their collective contribution of their history, the pretense to claim themselves ontologically superior or more irreplaceable than another.

The comprehension of the past cannot be superimposed on moral judgments. To defer to history, morality becomes condemned to powerlessness, because it bases itself on indignation — defined by Aristotle as a non-vicious form of jealousy — and that by proceeding by discrediting, indignation prevents the analysis

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31. *Les Abus de la Mémoire* (Paris: Arlea, 1995).
32. Bernard-Henri Lévy in *Le Point* (December 13, 1997), p. 146.
33. "As for myself, I do not feel any embarrassment," writes Jean Daniel, "to claim that this quasi-mystical conception presents all the dangers of a Judeo-centric vision." See his "Sur un texte d'Alain Besançon" in *Commentaire* (Spring 1998), p. 228.

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of what it discredits. As Clément Rosset writes: "Moral disqualification allows one to avoid all intelligent efforts to grasp the disqualified object, in the sense that a moral judgment always translates into a refusal to analyze and at the same time a refusal to think."[34] In addition, the moral denunciation of communism or of Nazism overlooks the fact that these systems themselves boast they are eminently moral. They do not pretend to abolish morality, but to invent another one — or to oppose theirs to that of others.[35]

Alain Badiou points out that: "Supporters of the ethical ideology are so intent in locating the particularity of the extermination directly in evil, that very often they categorically deny that Nazism was political at all. But this is a position at the same time weak and lacking courage . . . The supporters of 'democracy and human rights' are fond of defining politics, with Hannah Arendt, as the domain of "being together" . . . [But] Hitler himself wanted nothing more for the Germans than 'being together'."[36] Totalitarian systems are political systems. It is sufficient to condemn them by recognizing that they are politically bad: their poor political quality alone renders them unacceptable.

The idea of absolute evil applied to human affairs is senseless, because the absolute is not of this world. In the order of positive knowledge, not only are there no "incommensurable" sufferings, but there are also no crimes that cannot be compared to anything else. From the fact that the means employed to commit them are unprecedented, it does not follow that the crime is "unique." The criminal character of an act is the result of its criminal nature, not of the means employed to commit it. All events obtain within a context, and from this follows that they can be compared to others. All events are simultaneously unique and universal, eminently particular and eminently comparable. In the end, to isolate a totalitarian system in order to turn it into an absolute evil leads to forgetting that totalitarian systems themselves designate their adversaries as absolute evil. To see in them absolute evil is to mirror them. Banishing them from humanity is to become followers of their school.

Alain de Benoist

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34. *Le Démon de la Tautologie. Suivi de Cinq Petites Pièces Morales* (Paris: Minuit: 1997), p. 68.

35. Once again, as Clément Rosset writes: "To denounce the moral order imposed by the German National Socialists during their painful reign is not and has not been a healthy reaction, unless, and only unless, this denunciation itself does not take the form of a moral denunciation seeking to annul the first." *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.

36. *L'Ethique. Essai sur la Conscience du Mal* (Paris: Hatier, 1993), p. 58.

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